CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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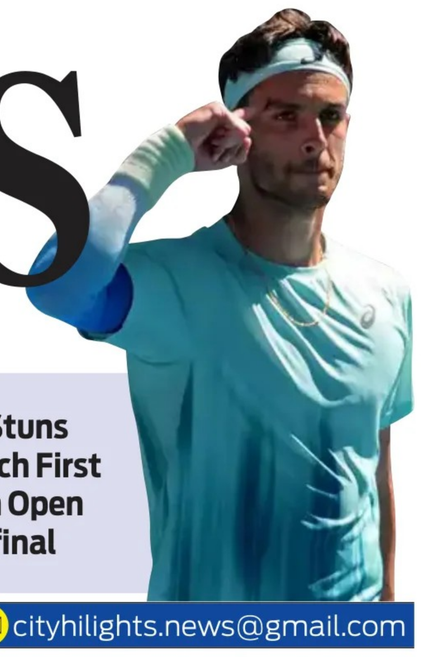

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PM calls for stronger resolve to build Viksit Bharat

'Best wishes on Republic Day. May this occasion add renewed energy and enthusiasm in our collective resolve to build a Viksit Bharat'

India is privileged to host European Council President António Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during our Republic Day celebrations.
—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India celebrated Republic Day with great enthusiasm and pride.

He highlighted that the magnificent parade at Kartavya Path showcased the strength of India's democracy, the richness of its heritage and the unity that binds the nation together. Sharing glimpses from the celebrations, he said that Kartavya Path witnessed a powerful display of national pride during the Republic Day celebrations.

The PM said India was privileged to host the President of the European Council, António Costa, and President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, during the Republic Day celebrations.

He noted that their presence underscored the growing strength of the India–European Union partnership and India's commitment to shared values. He added that the visit would add momentum to the deepening engagement and cooperation between India and Europe across diverse sectors.

Modi said the Republic Day parade showcased India's formidable security apparatus, reflecting the nation's preparedness, technological capability and unwavering commitment to safeguarding its citizens.

In a series of X posts, the Prime Minister said: "India celebrated Republic Day with great enthusiasm and pride. The magnificent parade at Kartavya Path showcased the strength of our democracy, the richness of our heritage and the unity that binds our nation together. Here are some glimpses…"

Successful India makes world stable: EU chief

NEW DELHI

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Monday said that a "successful India" makes the world more "stable, prosperous, and secure", a statement that came ahead of a "historic" trade agreement between New Delhi and the European Union.

Leyen, who is on a three-day visit to India, attended India's Republic Day celebrations as a chief guest and said it was an "honour of a lifetime". Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa were the chief guests as India marked its 77th Republic Day. "A successful India makes the world more stable, prosperous and secure. And we all benefit," von der Leyen posted on X.

Leyen is in India for summit talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which are scheduled for Tuesday.

Seating row returns as Cong flags Rahul Gandhi, Kharge's seats as 'lack of protocol'

The Opposition's objection to seating arrangements at the Republic Day parade have sparked political sparring multiple times, and this year may be no different. Congress MP and general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala on Monday flagged the seating of Leader of Opposition (Lok Sabha) Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge at the annual Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path. He shared an image of the two leaders seated in the third row and alleged a lack of protocol and "decorum". "Does such treatment of the leader of the opposition in the country meet the standards of any decorum, tradition, and protocol? This only reveals the frustration of a government plagued by an inferiority complex," he said. He said that, in a democracy, differences will persist, but this treatment meted out to Rahul Gandhi "is unacceptable".

CM warns of bid to weaken Constitution, urges pledge on R-Day

BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday warned of a conspiracy to render the Constitution irrelevant by curtailing the autonomy of constitutional institutions.

He also urged people to take a pledge to protect the Constitution on Republic Day.

The chief minister made these remarks in his message to the people of the state on the occasion of the 77th Republic Day. "Those who are opposing the Constitution are against social change and social justice. People should understand that they are opposing laws and programmes that are in favour of the poor, farmers, workers, Dalits, and the exploited," Siddaramaiah said.

In a statement, he noted that even when Babasaheb Ambedkar presented the Constitution to the nation, there were forces that opposed it, and that even today, calls to amend or abolish the Constitution are being heard in some quarters. "But those who understand that this is not an easy task are trying to weaken it slowly. This is a conspiracy that is slowly poisoning. We should be wary of this conspiracy to make the Constitution irrelevant by taking away the autonomy of constitutional institutions," he said.

'World's oldest and largest democracies': Trump greets India, cites historic bond

New Delhi : The United States and India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies, US President Donald Trump said on Monday as he greeted India on its 77th Republic Day celebrations. Trump's greetings came amid continuing strain in ties between the two countries over a range of issues, including Washington's policies on trade and tariffs. "On behalf of the people of the United States, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of India as you celebrate your 77th Republic Day," the US president said."The United States and India share a historic bond as the world's oldest and largest democracies," he added. Trump's message was put out on social media by the US embassy in New Delhi.

STRIKING DISPLAY OF NATIONAL PRIDE

A tourist from Ahmedabad in Gujarat adorned himself in the colors of the Tricolour, carried a miniature model of BrahMos, and waved the National Flag while chanting 'Bharat Mata ki jai' as he marked the 77th Republic Day at the renowned Ghanta Ghar in Lal Chowk, Srinagar. Arun, the tourist, said, "I send my best wishes to everyone on this Republic Day. I have been visiting here consistently since 2022. From this place, I want to convey a message to the Government of India and PM Modi: today's youth not only dream but also witness their dreams materializing. Raising and waving the Tiranga here used to be a daunting task. Narendra Modi ji was the first to raise the Tiranga in this location. The circumstances were not favorable back then. I have been coming here alone since 2022, and I have been proudly waving the Tiranga here." (Right) A tableau from the R-Day Parade in Bengaluru. ➤ CH PHOTO

Prez Murmu awards Ashok Chakra to Shubhanshu Shukla

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu conferred the Ashok Chakra to Group Captain and Indian astronaut Shubhnashu Shukla as part of the Republic Day 2026 celebrations in New Delhi. After the 21 Gun Salute, presented by the 1721 Ceremonial Battery of the 172 Field Regiment, Murmu conferred the Ashok Chakra to Shukla.who created history by becoming the first India to visit the International Space Station (ISS).

POPPY ROW ESCALATES

Kuki houses burned in Manipur amid poppy cultivation dispute

GUWAHATI

Fresh violence was reported in Manipur on Monday after several houses were set ablaze at K Songlung (II) village in Kangpokpi district, prompting residents to flee. The Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF), a Naga rebel group, claimed responsibility for the attack.

In a statement, the ZUF said the action was part of its intensified campaign against illegal poppy cultivation, drug trafficking, and what it termed unlawful encroachment by illegal immigrants within the "ancestral, customary and historical territory" of the Zeliangrong Inpui Naga people. The group claimed it had earlier issued repeated public warnings that went unheeded.

According to the outfit, its cadres destroyed farmhouses, farms, and dismantled unauthorised structures allegedly linked to illegal poppy cultivation.

The ZUF asserted that such activities threatened public safety, indigenous land rights, and the future of the region. It also warned that no foreign or illegal settlers would be allowed to occupy or exploit Zeliangrong land under any pretext.

Reacting strongly, the Kuki-Zo organisation Committee on Tribal Unity (CoTU) condemned what it described as the "razing of the village" in broad daylight. The group questioned the preparedness of security forces and said the incident undermined the constitutional authority of the Governor, especially as Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13 last year.

CoTU alleged that several Kuki-Zo villages along the fringes of Kangpokpi district, including K Songlung (II), have repeatedly been targeted by the ZUF. It issued a 24-hour ultimatum to the state administration to arrest those responsible, failing which it threatened a total shutdown of two national highways from the midnight of January 27 to January 28.

Meanwhile, the Sadar Hill Chiefs' Association stated that K Songlung (II) is a recognised Kuki village and denied allegations of poppy cultivation.

QUICK READ

Cops seize 10,000 kg ammonium nitrate, 1 arrested

NAGAUR (RAJASTHAN)

Just ahead of Republic Day on Monday, Nagaur police conducted a major operation under the Explosives Act, leading to the seizure of a large quantity of explosive material and the arrest of one accused. Nagaur Superintendent of Police (SP) Mridul Kachhawa said that acting on the inputs, the district police conducted a major operation and arrested the accused, Suleman Khan. Police seized 10,000 kg of ammonium nitrate along with a large quantity of detonators, detonating wire and other mining-related blasting materials.

MOTHER OF ALL TRADE DEALS

India-EU wrap up talks for landmark trade deal, announcement today

NEW DELHI

India and the European Union (EU) have successfully concluded negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Monday.

He said the trade deal, from the Indian perspective, is balanced and forward-looking, which will help in better economic integration of India with the EU. It is expected to propel trade and investments in both economies.

"Negotiations have been successfully concluded. The deal has been finalised," Agrawal said. Legal scrubbing of the FTA text is underway, and efforts are being made to complete the remaining processes and sign the pact at an early date. The deal is expected to be signed this year and may come into effect early next year.

Implementation of the deal will take time, as it requires approval from the EU Parliament, while in India, only the nod of the Union Cabinet is needed. The pact has been finalised after 18 years of negotiations, with talks initially launched in 2007. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has described this free trade agreement (FTA) as "the mother of all deals" the country has signed so far.

The FTA is likely to provide duty-free access to a number of Indian goods from labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, chemicals, gems and jewellery, electrical machinery, leather, and footwear. The EU's tariffs on Indian goods are about 3.8 per cent on average, with labour-intensive sectors attracting about 10 per cent import duty. India's weighted average duty on EU goods is about 9.3 per cent, with particularly high duties on automobiles (35.5%), plastics (10.4%), and chemicals and pharmaceuticals (9.9%).

In an FTA, both sides reduce or eliminate import duties on over 90% of goods traded between them. The pact also liberalises norms to promote trade in services sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, accounting, and auditing.

The conclusion of the negotiations comes ahead of the India–EU summit, where the free trade agreement, along with a strategic defence pact and a mobility framework, is expected to be key outcomes.

An announcement on the conclusion of talks will be made on Tuesday.

QUICK READ

Ballari District Fitness Association honors top athletes

BALLARI

Malatesh Shivappa Mungli from Agalakeri village in Koppal district won second place in the Kalyana Karnataka division bodybuilding and powerlifting competition recently held in Ballari. The event was organized by the Ballari District Fitness Association. Malatesh, known for participating in GK Classic Season-1, impressed judges with his bodybuilding skills and strength feats. He works at Kirloskar Industrial Ferrous Limited near Bevinahalli. The competition was judged by well-known bodybuilder and actor G.K. Swami, along with Maruti, Raghavendra Thakur, Javid, Mohammed Ismail, and Ajay Pradeep. Many youths from Maruti Gym attended, cheering participants and celebrating the spirit of fitness and dedication.

Pig rearing dispute turns violent in Bagalkot

BAGALKOT

A clash over pig rearing turned violent at Beelagi Cross in Bagalkot district on Monday, leaving four people injured, three of them seriously. Police said members from one area entered another, sparking an argument that soon became a physical fight. During the incident, a temporary hut was allegedly set on fire and destroyed. The injured, identified as Mahesh, Durgappa, Nagesh, and Akash, suffered injuries to their head, hands, and legs. They were admitted to a private hospital. Police reached the spot, began an investigation, and assured action. Women relatives wept, alleging threats and demanding safety and justice from authorities soon.

Forest Department captures monkey in Shahapura Village

KOPPAL

The Forest Department successfully caught a monkey in Shahapura village, ending months of trouble caused by a monkey plague. For three to four months, monkeys had been raiding homes, stealing bread, rice, fruits, and nuts, and even frightening children, women, and tractor drivers. The village's green fields, ponds, and fruit trees attracted the animals. Environmentalist Veeranna Komalapura consulted with Gram Panchayat members and village leaders, prompting the Forest Department to set traps. The captured monkey was safely released into the wild. Villagers expressed relief and congratulated local officials and the Panchayat for handling the situation, restoring safety and peace in the community.

Zameer Ahmed slams Kumaraswamy over CM dreams

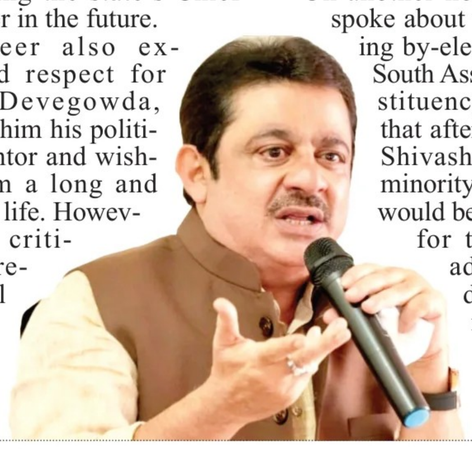
Zameer praised H.D. Devegowda as his mentor, wished him well, and criticized regional parties for losing influence with BJP

DAVANAGERE

Minister Zameer Ahmed made a sharp comment on former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy's statement about aiming for the 2028 Chief Minister post, saying, "Everyone dreams at night, Kumaraswamy dreams during the day."

Speaking to reporters in Davangere, Zameer reminded that Kumaraswamy did not claim to be CM in 2013, 2019, or 2023. He pointed out that when Siddaramaiah was part of the JDS, the party won 59 seats, which Kumaraswamy could not match. In the 2023 elections, JDS managed only 19 seats, and Zameer accused Kumaraswamy of merely daydreaming about becoming the state's Chief Minister in the future.

Zameer also expressed respect for H.D. Devegowda, calling him his political mentor and wishing him a long and healthy life. However, he criticized regional parties for losing influence after aligning with the BJP and questioned what would happen if they continue to support the party.



On another note, Zameer spoke about the upcoming by-election in the South Assembly constituency. He said that after Shamanur Shivashankarappa, minority candidates would be considered for tickets. He added that a demand for minority representation exists and that he would submit a report to the party high command. Decisions on candidate selection will ultimately rest with the party leadership, he clarified.

The minister's remarks highlight the ongoing political debate in Karnataka and underline the Congress leadership's focus on strengthening representation for minority communities while questioning the credibility of opponents' claims. His statements reflect both political strategy and a critique of rival party ambitions, keeping voters and party workers engaged in the discussion ahead of future elections.

Gadag honors martyrs, officials stress constitutional values

H.K. Patil paid floral tributes to Sangolli Rayanna's portrait, with officials and representatives honoring the hero's sacrifice against British rule in silence.

GADAG

Martyrdom Day and Republic Day were observed with respect and reflection at the District Administration Building in Gadag, where leaders remembered freedom fighters and reminded officials of their duty to serve people with honesty and humanity.

As part of Martyrdom Day, Law and Tourism Minister H.K. Patil paid floral tributes to the portrait of brave warrior Sangolli Rayanna. The ceremony was held in the auditorium of the district administration office. Several public representatives and senior officials stood in silence to honor the sacrifice of the hero who fought against British rule.

Among those present were Urban Development Authority Chairman Akbarasab Babarchi, Deputy Commissioner C.N. Sridhar, Superintendent of Police Rohana Jagadeesh, Additional Deputy Commissioner Duragesha K.M, Tahsildar Srinivasamurthy Kulkarni, and other officers and community leaders.

Later, Republic Day celebrations were held at the same venue. Deputy Commissioner Sridhar hoisted the national flag and addressed government staff about the importance of the Constitution in daily administration.

He said the Constitution guides the nation just like moral teachings guide personal life. Officers, he added, must work as a bridge between the government and citizens. He urged them to listen patiently to public problems and solve them without ego or pride.

"Law is not just a rulebook but a promise of justice," he said, asking officials to act with compassion while enforcing rules.

District-level officers and staff attended the event, which ended with a renewed pledge to uphold constitutional values and serve people with dedication and fairness. Students and visitors also joined the programmes, giving the events a warm community spirit and reminding everyone that true freedom came through great sacrifice.

Thangadgi highlighted state welfare schemes for women, youth, and poor families, including free travel, power, allowances, and Annabhagya support

Shivraj highlights citizens' constitutional responsibilities

KOPPAL

Minister Shivraj S. Thangadgi said fundamental rights and duties are like the two eyes of the Constitution, guiding every citizen and government. He spoke after hoisting the national flag at the 77th Republic Day celebration held at the district stadium on Monday. He said India became free in 1947 after the sacrifice of countless patriots. Later, under leaders like Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Constitution was drafted and came into force on January 26, 1950, uniting the country under one legal framework.

Calling the Preamble a guidebook, the Minister said people must value both rights and responsibilities equally. Respect for the Constitution, he added, comes from actions that promote equality, unity and justice.

Listing welfare efforts, Thangadgi highlighted state guarantee schemes supporting women, youth and poor families. He shared district figures on free bus travel for women, household power benefits, youth allowance and food security support under Annabhagya.

He said housing titles are being given to families who lived for years without legal documents. Development funds have also been approved for roads, health centers and education buildings across the district.

Progress under rural employment schemes, farm support programs and horticulture projects was noted. He said steps are being taken to promote crops and seek a GI tag for the Koppal saffron mango.

Cultural programs are being organized to protect Kannada language, folk art and traditions. He added that drinking water, hospital and court projects are moving forward with funding support.

The Minister urged citizens to stay united, respect the Constitution and work together for inclusive development. Many officials attended the ceremony with patriotic spirit.

Savita community seeks respect, rights, and support

GADAG

Leaders of the Savita community have urged the government and society to recognize their traditional service, ensure dignity, and provide stronger financial and social support, ahead of Shri Savita Maharshi Jayanti on January 27.

Krishna H. Hadapada, district president of Gadag Savita Samaj, said the community has followed several traditional occupations for centuries, including barber services, folk music, and indigenous healing practices.

These professions once held social respect, but over time, many members say they began facing discrimination and social neglect.

He explained that while barbers serve people from all communities, they are still treated with bias in some places, especially in rural areas.

Due to caste-based insults and social pressure, some families have migrated to cities or left their hereditary professions.

Bagalkot marks Republic Day with grandeur pride

BAGALKOT

The 77th Republic Day celebrations were held with great enthusiasm at the District Stadium in Navanagar, Bagalkot. District In-charge Minister R.B. Thimmapura unfurled the national flag and took the salute during the ceremonial parade.

The highlight of the programme was a colourful and disciplined march-past by various contingents, which earned loud applause from the audience. The parade showcased unity, discipline and patriotism among the participants. Members of Parliament P.C. Gaddigowdara and Member of Legislative Council P.H. Poojar attended the event along with senior district officials. Students, government staff and members of the public also took part in large numbers, making the celebration lively and meaningful.

Speaking briefly on the occasion, leaders highlighted the importance of the Constitution and reminded citizens of their duties towards the nation. They said Republic Day is a reminder of freedom, equality and justice for all.

The entire programme reflected strong patriotic spirit and collective pride. The celebrations concluded peacefully, leaving behind a sense of unity, respect for democratic values and renewed commitment to serve the country with honesty and dedication. Officials thanked students, police personnel, volunteers and organizers for smooth arrangements, disciplined conduct and public cooperation, which helped ensure the historic day was celebrated safely, orderly and with lasting positive memories statewide.

Constitution spirit highlighted during Koppal Republic ceremony

KOPPAL

District Collector Dr. Suresh B. Itnal said the Constitution is the soul of Indian democracy and urged citizens to understand its values while working for the nation's development. He spoke after hoisting the national flag during the 77th Republic Day celebration at the District Administration Building on Monday.

He reminded people that India became independent on August 15, 1947, but began to govern itself under its own Constitution on January 26, 1950. Referring to history, he said the demand for complete self-rule was declared during the Lahore session in 1929, and January 26, 1930, was observed as Purna Swaraj Day. Later, a Constitution Drafting Committee was formed under Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. After studying many world constitutions for nearly three years, the final document was adopted on November 26, 1949, and came into force two months later.

Dr. Itnal said the Constitution guarantees equality, fraternity, dignity and freedom of expression, making it one of the most respected guiding documents in the world. He called on everyone to respect these principles and work together for peace, unity and steady progress.

District Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Varnith Negi, Additional District Collector Sidrameshwar and several district-level officers and staff attended the ceremony.

Later in the day, floral tributes were offered to freedom fighter Kranti Veera Sangolli Rayanna at the Collector's office hall. Dr. Itnal, Zilla Panchayat CEO Varnith Negi and other officials remembered his bravery and sacrifice, paying respects and recalling his role in resisting colonial rule. The events ended with a shared pledge to uphold constitutional values and serve society with honesty and dedication for future generations of our nation.

Uphold constitution's ideals, Taluk officer urges citizens

BHATKAL : Tahsildar Nagendra Kolashetti emphasized the importance of upholding the Constitution's ideals while addressing the 77th Republic Day celebrations at YMSA Taluk Stadium in Navayat Colony. "The Constitution not only guarantees equal rights to every citizen but also entrusts us with the responsibility of preserving national unity, integrity, and social justice," he said. Highlighting India's journey, he recalled that on January 26, 1950, the nation became a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. "Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision and commitment laid the foundation for governance. Justice, freedom, and equality remain the driving forces of our nation," Kolashetti noted. He explained the role of the taluk administration as a bridge between the government and citizens, citing initiatives like computerization of land records, simplification of cadastral amendments, transparent distribution of social security schemes, and infrastructure development. Kolashetti also urged youth to practice discipline, honesty, and patriotism in daily life.

NEW HORIZONS AHEAD

Hattaragi Gram Panchayat Building Inaugurated by Min

HATTARAGI

Minister Satish Jarkiholi inaugurated the new Swarajya Soudha building of the Hattaragi Gram Panchayat, constructed at a cost of around Rs. 83.14 lakh from his personal resources. Speaking at the ceremony, he emphasized the commitment to the overall development of Hattaragi village and the surrounding five villages under the Gram Panchayat.

"Over the past 20 years, every government scheme has been implemented successfully in these villages. Proper utilization of these schemes is vital, and the administration must reach people as smoothly as this new building," he said. He praised the unity of the local people, who have elected their representatives for the fourth consecutive term, and assured continued development initiatives.

The inauguration was blessed by Sri Guru Siddeshwar Mahaswamy of Hattaragi and Dr. Anand Maharaja Gosavi of Sri Hattaragi Hari Mandir. Former Gram Panchayat President Mahadeva Patoli, current Gram Panchayat President Sameer Bepari, Vice President Akshata Bhimagol, and other officials including Abhiyantha Praveen Mathapati and Executive Officer T.R. Mallada were present. Gram Panchayat Development Officer Anand Holennavara introduced the program, while S.A. Amminabhavi welcomed the gathering and compered the event.

The program highlighted the Gram Panchayat's commitment to transparent governance and the well-being of residents. Minister Jarkiholi called for continued cooperation between the administration and villagers to ensure the successful implementation of government schemes for the community's benefit.

QUICK READ

Hulakoti honors Rayanna on Republic Day

HULAKOTI

Hulakoti village celebrated the 77th Republic Day alongside the Martyrdom Day of Sri Krantiveer Sangolli Rayanna. The Sri Beereshwar Trust Committee organized a special flag hoisting and worship ceremony at Rayanna's portrait to honor his sacrifice for the nation. Former District Shepherds Association president Kariappa Kondikoppa, Gram Panchayat members Umesh Rolli and Nimbana Durgannavar, and village elders including Mylarappa Nimbanayakar, Mariyappa Nimbanayakar, Ravi Kavadaki, Revana Siddappa Poojara, and several others attended the event. The ceremony reflected respect for Rayanna's bravery and reinforced patriotic spirit among villagers, combining the memory of a local hero with national pride on Republic Day.

Haveri stray dog neutering center closes after 38 days

HAVERI

A stray dog neutering center in Haveri APMC, opened at a cost of lakhs of rupees, has closed after just 38 days, sterilizing only 83 out of 1,400 stray dogs in the city. The center aimed to neuter 30 dogs daily and vaccinate them against rabies, following Supreme Court orders. Citizens criticized the municipal council for unscientific methods, including using untrained civil servants to catch dogs, and raised concerns about pregnant dogs increasing the population. Municipal Commissioner Kantaraju said delays occurred due to staff shortages and initial contractor disinterest, assuring that work would progress smoothly once contractors take over.

Freedom fighters remembered on Republic Day

SIRSI

We are living peacefully today because of the sacrifices of countless freedom fighters and revolutionaries, said Sirsi Sub-Divisional Officer R.G. Chandrashekhar. He was speaking after hoisting the national flag during the 77th Republic Day celebrations at Sri Marikamba District Cricket Stadium. Chandrashekhar said Dr. B.R. Ambedkar gave India a strong and inclusive Constitution, which protects citizens' rights and duties. He urged people to preserve and strengthen constitutional values. The ceremony was attended by local leaders, officials, students, and citizens, who gathered in large numbers. Patriotic spirit filled the venue as people remembered national heroes and their contributions with pride together.

Minister Patil urges strict adherence to Constitution

He urged the Central Govt to strengthen job guarantee programs, supporting rural workers, creating village assets, and boosting local employment

GADAG

Karnataka Law and Tourism Minister H.K. Patil called on citizens and leaders to respect and protect the Constitution while speaking at the Republic Day celebrations held at the K.H. Patil District Stadium.

He said the Constitution, adopted in 1949, is the foundation of India's democracy and must never be twisted for political gain. He expressed concern that people in high positions sometimes ignore its spirit while making decisions.

Despite financial challenges, he said Karnataka has continued welfare work through five guarantee schemes, helping many poor families. He noted that Gadag's economy is growing, with average monthly per capita income reaching about Rs 22,000.

Patil said every citizen must treat even small violations of the Constitution seriously and work to strengthen democratic values.

He also urged the Central Government to support rural workers by restoring stronger job guarantee programmes, saying they help create village assets and local employment.

Highlighting heritage efforts, the Minister said steps are under way to seek UNESCO recognition for Lakkundi, a historic temple town. The state has approved Rs 10.16 crore to conserve six ancient monuments, including temples and stepwells.

He praised a local boy who honestly handed over valuable artefacts found during digging, and said the government supported his family with housing, education, and a job.

Officials, public representatives, and many students attended, joining the parade and cultural events that marked the national festival with pride and hope. Patil said true patriotism means fairness, unity, and service to all people, especially the weak and voiceless, and urged youth to carry constitutional values into daily life. Together, he said, progress becomes meaningful for everyone.

ZAMEER AHMED emphasizes support for poor, backward citizens

VIJAYANAGAR

The minister said five manifesto schemes were quickly implemented, distributing over 80,000 houses statewide through Rajiv Gandhi and Ashraya programs, benefiting the poor, laborers, with land support.

Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan, in charge of Waqf, Housing, Minority Welfare and district administration, announced the government's sixth guarantee: providing housing to all homeless citizens by the end of 2026. Speaking at the 77th Republic Day celebrations at the district stadium, he highlighted the government's focus on the welfare of the poor, backward, and homeless sections.

The minister noted that the five manifesto guarantee schemes were implemented within a month of taking office. Under various housing programs, 36,780 houses were distributed in March 2024 and 42,345 recently in Hubballi, totaling over 80,000 houses across the state. Housing initiatives under Rajiv Gandhi and Ashraya schemes aim to benefit poor, destitute, and wage laborers. Land allocations and assistance for self-built houses have been provided, including 1,023 acres in Bangalore in 2016 for the Rajiv Gandhi Housing Scheme.

Zameer Ahmed Khan stated that about ₹60,000 crore is being spent annually on the guarantee schemes, which have positively impacted the economy and living standards of the poor and middle class. He assured that criticisms regarding financial sustainability are being addressed through ongoing development projects. The Republic Day program also honored outstanding achievers, including Chiru, who won first place in a state debate competition and received a ₹50,000 cash prize. Cultural programs by school students, showcasing Kannada language, national values, and patriotism, were well received. A lively parade was conducted under Parade Commander Govind, featuring the Police Department, Home Guards, NCC, Scouts and Guides, Seva Dal, and school students.

Hospet Urban Development Authority Chairman H.N.F. Imam Niazi, District Guarantee Scheme Implementation Committee Chairman K. Shivamurthy, Deputy Commissioner Kavita S. Mannikeri, Zilla Panchayat CEO Nongjoy Mohammed Ali Akram Shah, District Superintendent of Police S. Jahnavi, Additional Deputy Commissioner B. Balakrishnappa, Assistant Commissioner P. District, and other taluk-level officials were present.

Jarkiholi said police contacted M'rashtra, visited area, but details remain unclear about incident location exact

Jarkiholi seeks clarity over Chorla Ghat robbery

BELAGAVI

District In-charge Minister Satish Jarkiholi on Monday said Karnataka police are waiting for clear information from Maharashtra authorities in the alleged ₹400 crore robbery reported near Chorla Ghat, a border region touching Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa. He said the state police cannot proceed fully unless details about the exact location and investigation findings are officially shared.

Speaking to reporters after Republic Day celebrations, Jarkiholi said the district Superintendent of Police has already written to Maharashtra police and a team has visited the area. However, he claimed that proper information has not yet been provided. "If they share the details, we will do our job," he said, adding that it is still unclear in which state limits the incident actually took place.

Responding to political allegations linked to the case, the Minister said the matter should not be turned into a party issue without verified facts. He said investigators must first establish what happened and who was involved before drawing conclusions.

Jarkiholi also listed ongoing development works in Belagavi district, including new government buildings, bridges and flyovers. He said several long-pending projects are nearing completion and more funds have been requested for additional works.

The Minister further spoke about steps being taken to stop fake property registrations in the district.

He said officials have filed cases and held meetings to tighten monitoring at sub-registrar offices.

He added that development at Kittur Rani Channamma Zoo is almost complete and an inquiry may be ordered into issues raised at Rani Channamma University. He urged cooperation between states to ensure transparency, lawful action, and public confidence in the handling of the sensitive case overall.

Photos row sparks tension at Ballari BJP office

BALLARI

A controversy broke out during Republic Day celebrations at the BJP office in Ballari after members of the Bhim Army alleged that photos of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were not properly honored during the flag hoisting ceremony.

The event was held at the party office in Vajpayee Layout to mark the 77th Republic Day. Former MLA Somashekar Reddy, District President Anil Naidu, and several party leaders attended the function and took part in the flag hoisting.

Soon after the event, Bhim Army members claimed that while photos from the celebration were shared on social media, images showing tributes to Dr. Ambedkar were missing. They said this showed a lack of respect to the architect of the Indian Constitution.

The allegation quickly spread online and triggered debate among local residents and activists.

An audio clip also went viral in which Bhim Army leader Raghu was heard questioning former MLA Somashekar Reddy over the phone.

Dharwad students shine at South India exhibition

DHARWAD

Students and teachers from Dharwad district were honoured for winning prizes at the South India Science Exhibition held in Hyderabad, Telangana, from January 19 to January 23, during Republic Day celebrations. The felicitation programme was held at R.N. Shetty Stadium, where Karnataka Labour Minister and District In-charge Minister Santosh Lad congratulated the achievers. He praised their innovation, hard work, and contribution to bringing recognition to the district.

The event was attended by Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Bhuvanesh Patil, Deputy Director Administration S.S. Keladimat, Deputy Director Development Basavaraj Nalatwada, Dharwad Gram Field Education Officer Ramakrishna Sadalgi, DIET Senior Lecturer Deepak Kulkarni, and officials from the Information and Publicity Department.

Kumar Shankar Hoogar and Naveen Nayak, Class Nine students of Shri S.R. Bommai Government High School, Hubballi Taluk, won in the group category for their Automatic Engine Lock System project. They were guided by teacher S.B. Bhavikatti and also received a special prize from the Karnataka Science and Technology Promotion Society, Bengaluru. In the individual category, Kumari Offsheen Rahut of Presentation Girls High School, Dharwad, won first prize in the Sensor Lighthouse category. She was guided by teacher Savita Shigavi. The achievements inspired students across the district.

Gauri emphasizes Congress role in independence movement

DHARWAD

The Congress party marked the 77th Republic Day at its Dharwad office on Monday, with KPCC Pradhan Mantri Darshi and Rani Chennamma Block Congress President Nagaraj Gauri hoisting the national flag. Speaking at the event, Gauri asserted that the Congress party played the key role in India's freedom struggle. "It is the Congress's right to celebrate Independence Day and Ganaraj Jyotsava. Neither the BJP nor RSS workers sacrificed their lives for this country," he said.

Gauri praised Dr. B.R. Ambedkar for framing a strong and well-equipped Constitution. He criticized the BJP for attempting to change the Constitution and said, "No one can alter the Constitution made by Ambedkar, which guarantees justice and equality to every citizen."

He also addressed public concerns, noting irregularities such as vote rigging and injustices in Hubli, Dharwad, and surrounding western regions. "We will not allow anyone to face injustice. In the upcoming elections, the Congress will win in the western region. We will stand by our party workers," he said.

The event began with the Congress office decorated with national flags and portraits of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, paying homage to the leaders. Block President Ishwar Shivalli, Municipal Member R. D. Shambhu Sa Limani, Kavita Kabber, Deepa Ni Ralakatti, and several other party members and activists participated in the celebrations.

The program emphasized the Congress party's commitment to India's freedom ideals, constitutional values, and protection of citizens' rights, while reiterating support for party workers and efforts to ensure fair elections in the region.

'Davanagere development focused on irrigation'

DAVANAGERE

Davanagere district is set to receive special emphasis in the upcoming state budget, with priority given to irrigation, health, and education, said S.S. Mallikarjun, Minister for Mines and Earth Sciences, Horticulture, and District In-charge. He spoke to the media at JJM Medical College after the Republic Day program held at the district stadium. The minister said proposals for the district's development have been submitted to the Chief Minister, and funds will be sought in the budget accordingly. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Bairanapada irrigation project in Harihar taluk is being prepared and will be submitted for Cabinet approval soon. Steps are also being taken to replace broken pipelines in lakes across Davanagere taluk with new cast iron pipes, ensuring proper water supply.

HONORING WOMEN HEROES

Swachh Vahini Women Hoist Flag at Joshi's Hubballi Office

HUBBALLI

Union Minister Prahlad Joshi's offices in New Delhi and Hubballi celebrated the 77th Republic Day in a unique and inspiring way, highlighting women empowerment.

At his New Delhi office, Minister Joshi hoisted the national flag alongside his colleagues and security personnel. In Hubballi, the spotlight was on Kallavva Gali, a 57-year-old female driver of the Belur Gram Panchayat Swachh Vahini, who proudly hoisted the flag at the minister's district office. Her act symbolized respect for women and their growing role in public service.

The flag hoisting involved women drivers working under the `Sanjeevini–Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Organization' (KSRLPS) and participating in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. Minister Joshi described these women as "cleanliness ambassadors of rural areas," emphasizing their unique contribution to maintaining hygiene in both villages and towns.

Over 130 Swachh Vahini drivers were felicitated for their service. Joshi praised their work in improving lives and promoting sanitation. He also highlighted the Central Government's National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), which supports rural women and empowers them economically and socially. He urged citizens to recognize and respect women's important role in building clean and healthy families and communities.

The ceremony was attended by MLA Mahesh Tenginakai, Hubballi-Dharwad Municipal Corporation Mayor Jyoti Patil, former Mayor Veena Baradwad, Dharwad Rural BJP District President Ningappa Suthagatti, State ST Morcha General Secretary Mahendra Kautal, several municipal members, office staff, party leaders, and local activists. The Republic Day celebrations at Joshi's offices stood out as a model of women empowerment, public service, and civic responsibility, inspiring the community to appreciate the efforts of those keeping rural and urban spaces clean and orderly.

QUICK READ

KSRTC plans new Flybus fleet for KIAL

Bengaluru

The Flybus service is positioned as a premium airport commute option, featuring high-tech interiors, reclining seats, GPS connectivity and onboard bio-toilets. The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) is planning to introduce a new fleet of buses to its Flybus services to the Kempegowda International Airport, as most of the existing golden-coloured Volvo coaches operating on the route have become old. At present, the KSRTC operates Flybus services on 15 routes connecting the airport with major cities and towns- Mysuru (nine routes), Madikeri (two), Davangere (two) and Kundapura (two). In total, 44 Flybus trips are operated every day, covering around 10,240 km and serving close to 1,050 passengers daily.

Signal jump and collision, arrogant for questioning

Bengaluru

In a shocking incident, a motorcyclist rammed into a car travelling on Dickenson Road. The biker abused the driver of the car and said, who are you talking about, my bike, I like, he said. This inappropriate behaviour of the bike rider was captured by the car driver on his mobile camera. The driver shared the video on social media and appealed to the authorities concerned to take appropriate action.

Signal installation, increased traffic, vehicle riders complain

Bengaluru

Signals have been installed in the city to reduce traffic congestion and for safety reasons. Recently, a new signal has been installed at the Nagarbhavi roundabout. In addition, another signal has been installed near the Madduramma temple, which connects Nagarbhavi to Chandra Layout. Traffic congestion is increasing due to the installation of two signals at a distance of 100 to 200 meters. If signals are installed in this way, traffic congestion should be reduced. However, the congestion is increasing here, causing problems for motorists. The concerned authorities should find a solution to this problem, the vehicle riders have demanded.

'Land worth ₹255 cr granted to 22 Dalit, OBC mutts'

'The government has violated the stipulated norms while granting valuable land to religious institutions'

BENGALURU

The Congress government has decided to grant Rs 255 crore worth of land in Bengaluru to 22 Dalit and OBC mutts, overruling red flags raised by key departments on giving away gomala land and parcels that are within the city corporation limits. Documents reviewed show that the departments of finance, and law and parliamentary affairs advised against the decision as it might attract legal scrutiny since gomala land could not be alienated or granted to private organisations.

However, senior ministers said such opinions are nothing new and are almost similar for all land-grant requests. The govt made the decision last week. In early 2025, seers from Dalit and Backward Classes had sought land and assistance from the government to run their philanthropic institutions in Bengaluru. As part of the appeal, the president and general secretary of the Backward Dalit Mathadeeshwarara Okkuta, had sought land for 22 of their

mutts in Ravuttanahalli, Dasanapura of Bangalore North district. Some 34 acres and 9 guntas on Survey No. 57 and another parcel of 18 acres and 5 guntas on Survey No. 58 were given to these institutions. Each mutt was proposed to get between 20 guntas and four acres, depending on the size of the mutt, its followers and extend of social work.

Supreme Court has directed chief secretaries of all the states and Union territories to preserve poramboku/gomala/kharabu/waterbodies for public use. It further says land proposed to be given falls within 18km from erstwhile BBMP headquarters. As per Karnataka Land Grant Rules-1969, govt land within the city limits shall not be granted to any individual or private institutions and shall be reserved for public purpose. Therefore, there is no provision for granting the land, concluded the departments.

According to the finance department, the land value, as per guidance value, was Rs 1 crore an acre, while the same land, if converted but undeveloped, was worth Rs 1.8 crore. If developed, the land would be worth Rs 4.8 crore an acre. Revenue officials claimed some of these mutts who have been granted land were of recent origin and had no track record to substantiate their philanthropic work.

Liquor party turns deadly, rowdy-sheeter hacked to death

BENGALURU

A shocking murder has been reported from Nelamangala, where a rowdy-sheeter was brutally stabbed to death inside a lodge room following a liquor party. What initially appeared to be a casual gathering has now raised serious suspicions of a pre-planned killing.

The incident took place at Balaji Param Haas lodge, located near Nelamangala. The deceased has been identified as Nagaraj alias Auto Naga (32), a known rowdy-sheeter with multiple criminal cases registered against him. He was listed as a rowdy-sheeter in both Laggere and Huliyurdurga police stations. According to police sources, Nagaraj himself had booked the lodge room earlier in the afternoon. Later, a liquor and non-vegetarian food party was organised inside the room. Initially, three people, including Nagaraj, arrived at the lodge. As the party progressed, three more friends joined, taking the total number of people to six. During the party, an argument reportedly broke out. Suddenly, Nagaraj was attacked with a dagger and other deadly weapons, and was stabbed repeatedly at multiple places. He died on the spot due to excessive bleeding.

After committing the murder, all the accused fled from the lodge, leaving the body behind. The lodge staff later alerted the police, following which officers from Madanayakanahalli police station rushed to the spot and conducted an inspection.

The deceased, a native of Kamalapura in Huliyurdurga, was residing in Gangondanahalli. Police said he was involved in small-scale real estate activities apart from his criminal background.

Based on preliminary findings, police suspect the liquor party may have been arranged as part of a murder plan. A murder case has been officially registered at Madanayakanahalli Police Station.

Ice cream parlour incident: Public raise question about police behaviour

BENGALURU

An altercation between the parlour manager and the police over the issue of an ice cream parlour being open until late at night took place in the city's RT Nagar police station limits. The police's behaviour during this incident has been the subject of much public debate.

The ice cream parlour was still operating at around 11.30 pm. At this time, the RT Nagar police, who were patrolling, arrived at the spot. They questioned the Manager as to why the shop had not closed till this late as per the rules. At this time, a verbal altercation broke out between the two.

It is said that when the Manager approached the patrol vehicle, the police personnel there pushed him. A total of six policemen, including a gunman, were present at the scene and forced the manager into the jeep. There have been allegations of improper behaviour by the police in this case. The public is asking, why do the police behave like this at night. On the other hand, the parlour Manager is said to have raised his voice against the police. It is reported that the manager challenged the police by saying".

Woman commits suicide just 2 months after marriage

BENGALURU

A gruesome incident has come to light in which a resident of Yediyur Lake in the city committed suicide due to dowry harassment. A married woman named Keerthi (24) died under the Banashankari police station limits after just two years of marriage. The parents of the deceased have made serious allegations that this death is not just a suicide, but a victim of dowry harassment. Originally from Madhugiri taluk in Tumakuru district, Keerthi was married off to Guruprasad in a grand ceremony in November 2023. Her parents had spent around Rs 35 lakh on the wedding for their daughter's happiness.

Everything was going well for the newlyweds. However, over the past few months, it is said that her husband Guruprasad and his family members had started mentally and physically abusing Keerthi for extra money.

It is said that last December, her husband Guruprasad had demanded Rs 10 lakh on the pretext of building a house. The parents had already given Rs 8 lakh, hoping that their daughter would have a better life.

However, the harassment did not stop. Keerthi had repeatedly complained to her mother about this pain. When the harassment of the dowry demon became too much, Keerthi, fed up with life, hanged herself at her home yesterday morning.

Upon learning of Keerthi's suicide, her husband Guruprasad hid the truth from her parents and falsely informed them that Keerthi had fainted and was admitted to the hospital. When the parents arrived at the hospital, it was confirmed that Keerthi was dead. The shocked parents filed a complaint at the Banashankari police station.

The post-mortem examination of the body was completed and it has been handed over to the heirs. The parents have taken the body to their hometown in Madhugiri for the last rites.

Woman says husband kicked her out after cancer diagnosis

BENGALURU

A 22-year-old woman has filed a complaint with the North Women police, alleging her husband abandoned her after she was diagnosed with cancer and that she was subjected to sustained cruelty, humiliation, and body shaming by her in-laws. A senior police officer said the woman stated in her complaint that she was married on March 5, 2023. She alleged her family spent nearly Rs 13 lakh on the wedding and gave her gold and silver ornaments. The harassment began after a year, when she was diagnosed with cancer.

Her husband and in-laws allegedly harassed her instead of providing care and support. She claimed her in-laws subjected her to severe mental cruelty, making derogatory remarks about her hair loss and body shaming her by calling her an evil spirit.

She also alleged that her husband, a cab driver, developed a relationship with another woman and justified it by claiming her illness would "spread" to him and his family if she stayed with them.

'Rowdy-sheeter Shabbir killed over hafta tax collection'

BENGALURU

Explosive facts have come out regarding the recent gruesome murder case of rowdy sheeter Shabbir under the Bandepalya police station limits of City. The main reason for this murder was a fight over the collection of Hafta collection and maintenance of his status in the area. In connection with this murder, the police department is ready to take action under the stringent COCA Act against the 11 accused arrested. The murdered Shabbir was a rowdy sheeter in the Bandepalya area and was said to have been constantly harassing the public to maintain his air. He was regularly collecting hafta from local pawn shop owners and small traders. This had angered the locals. The main reason for the murder was a land dispute. Shabbir had set his sights on the land belonging to the accused Sunny's sister, which was next to the mosque. He had directly threatened Sunny, saying, you must give me this land, otherwise I will build a compound here. When Shabbir's harassment became too much, Sunny and 10 of his accomplices planned to kill Shabbir in a garage.

As per the plan, the accused, who noticed that Shabbir was alone, first threw salt powder in his eyes. By the time Shabbir recovered, 11 assassins had killed him with deadly weapons. After committing the crime, they hid the bloody deadly weapons somewhere and reached KR Puram railway station by auto. From there, they fled to Mumbai, Rajasthan and Hyderabad.

A special team led by DCP Narayan of Electronic City division conducted a technical operation and succeeded in arresting all 11 accused who were hiding in different states. Giving information about this, the DCP said, this is a systematic murder and we are preparing to invoke the COCA Act against the accused who have disturbed public peace.

Tailor takes loan from, lands in trap

BENGALURU

A desperate bid to raise a small loan to pay his children's school fees has landed a 38-year-old tailor from east Bengaluru in an alleged cybercrime case, after his bank account was misused for fraudulent transactions by an acquaintance. Riyaz Vali, a Bharathinagar resident who has worked at a ladies' tailoring shop in Pulakeshinagar for 15 years, received a call from an unknown number on Jan 21 while at work, a call he says turned his life upside down.

The caller introduced himself as a police officer from East Cyber Crime Police Station and asked me to come to the police station on Broadway Road in Shivajinagar. He told me not to worry but did not explain why I was being summoned, Riyaz told. The call left him terrified. The only time I ever visited a police station was during my passport verification. I was so shaken that I walked nearly three kilometres without realising it and reached the police station, he said. At the station, Riyaz was stunned to find his childhood friend Suhail already there. I was worried about why both of us were called, he said. Police informed him that his bank account had allegedly been used to receive money generated through cybercrimes, with transactions of nearly Rs 9 lakh routed through it.

Gaming fraud case, chargesheet filed

BENGALURU

The Enforcement Directorate, which is investigating a money laundering case worth thousands of crores of rupees in the name of Winjo Online Gaming, has submitted a chargesheet to a special court in Bengaluru.

A chargesheet has been filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against Vinjo Private Limited and its directors Pawan Nanda, Soumya Singh Rathod, Vinjo's Indian and foreign subsidiaries Vinjo US, Vinjo SG Private Limited, and Joe Private Limited. The ED investigation has revealed that about Rs 3,522 crore has

been involved in illegal activities. FIRs were registered against the fraud of Winjo Online Gaming in Bengaluru Cyber Crime Police Station, Rajasthan, New Delhi and Gurugram. In the wake of illegal money laundering, the ED had also registered a separate case and started an investigation. Then recently, ED officials raided the office of the Winjo company, the residences of the company directors and related places.

What looked like an accident was murder, case registered in Anekal crash

BENGALURU

A tragic car accident reported from Kammasandra village in Anekal taluk, on the outskirts of Bengaluru City, has taken a shocking turn. What was initially believed to be a drunk driving mishap is now being investigated as a case of murder, based on a complaint filed by the victim's mother.

The deceased, Prashanth (28), lost his life following the incident. Acting on the complaint submitted by his mother Anu, the Hebbagodi police have now registered a murder case under relevant sections of the IPC.

According to the police investigation, Prashanth had participated in a local cricket tournament in Kammasandra, where his team suffered a defeat. Disturbed by the loss, he reportedly returned home and spoke about it with his mother. Later in the evening, around 7.30 pm, Prashanth received a phone call and headed back to the cricket ground.

At the ground, Prashanth met his friend Roshan Hegde (27). During a drinking session, a heated argument broke out between the two. The exact reason for the fight is still under investigation, but police are examining whether cricket betting or anger over the match loss triggered the clash.

As the argument escalated, Roshan allegedly attempted to leave the spot in his car. Prashanth tried to stop the vehicle and reportedly held on to the left-side window, hanging outside the moving car. Despite this, Roshan is accused of driving at high speed and intentionally crashing the vehicle into a roadside tree, without stopping. The impact caused Prashanth, who was hanging outside the car, to suffer severe injuries. He was rushed to hospital but died on the way.

HAPPY MOMENTS

Rasthe Hubba, a celebration of community, culture

BENGALURU

Sanjay Nagar Rasthe Hubba 2026 brought the residents of Sanjay Nagar and RMV 2nd Stage together on a vibrant street along Boulevard Park, buzzing with activity from Sunday afternoon. Part of the BLR Hubba, the Rasthe Hubba was organised for the first time here and saw a colourful display of tradition and community spirit. Over 50 stalls, including food stalls selling items from chaats to probiotic drinks, lined the 3rd main road of Dollars Colony. Some of the unique stalls included those selling hand-woven dhurries (carpets) from Navalgund in Northern Karnataka and clothes from upcycled fabric made by women's groups from Chikkaballapur. Aromatics from recycled flowers, traditional games from rural Karnataka, books and lending library, and artworks made by artists residing nearby made this edition of Rasthe Hubba truly local. A stall to raise awareness about community animals, set up by local animal welfare groups, was also part of the line-up.

The District Governor of Rotary International District 3192, Elizabeth Cherian, inaugurated the event. Tackling pollution, environmental safety, health, socio-economic development, and protecting our culture and heritage should start in neighbourhoods. When neighbourhoods are taken care of, community responsibility increases, and this has a rippling effect, ensuring global change, she said. The stage saw dance and musical performances, including a performance by a group of 20 senior citizens over 80 years of age. The tree-lined street is a great location for the event. The weather is also pleasant. We had 127 performers from among the local residents. We plan to organise this every year henceforth, Rajagopal Hegde, president of Rotary Bangalore Rajamahal Vilas, said.

'We are all fearless due to decisions of Modi, Shah'

BENGALURU

Former Chief Minister DV Sadananda Gowda said that we are all fearless with the decision taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

He was speaking after hoisting the flag at the BJP office as part of the 77th Republic Day.

At this time, everyone is living without fear due to the bold decisions taken by Prime Minister Modi and Amit Shah. But we are more worried about external forces. He said that the very ones whom we helped to become an independent nation have started operations against us.

Regarding the money looting at Chorla Ghat in Belagavi,we have seen that during the Congress government, money was collected here and sent to different states. Perhaps this was collected at that time, and we do not know if it has become like this now, he expressed suspicion.

We have seen Congress inciting hooliganism on the issue of non-arrest of Rajiv Gowda in Shidlaghatta.

QUICK READ

Domestic dispute ends in double death tragedy

Chikkaballapura

A tragic incident occurred in Chelur taluk, Chikkaballapura, when 46-year-old Babajan killed his married lover, 40-year-old Salma, after a heated argument, and later committed suicide by hanging at her house. Salma, a mother of two, had been living with Babajan for six years. Babajan, also married with three children, was reportedly separated from his family. Both bodies were sent to Bagepalli Government Hospital morgue, and Chelur police have registered a case. The shocking incident has left the local community in grief, highlighting the devastating consequences of domestic disputes and personal conflicts. Authorities are investigating the matter further.

Chitradurga marks Republic Day with pride

Chitradurga

The 77th Republic Day was celebrated at the Information and Public Relations Department in Chitradurga on Monday. District Information Officer B.V. Tukaram Rao hoisted the national flag at Information Bhavan, located in the District Collector's office premises. Staff members, including M. Avinash, P.M. Venugopal, G. Venkatesh, M.J. Boresh, Pasha, Anjanamurthy, apprentice Muddukiran, Chandrashekhar, and journalist G.O.N. Murthy, attended the event. The ceremony highlighted unity, patriotism, and respect for the nation's Constitution. Attendees stood together to honor India's democratic values, taking a moment to reflect on the country's progress and shared responsibilities for a better and stronger future.

Republic Day celebration inspires students and faculty

Sri Siddhartha Engineering College, Tumakuru, celebrated the 77th Republic Day with patriotic fervour, reflecting on nation-building, responsibility and technological progress

TUMAKURU

Sri Siddhartha Engineering College marked the 77th Republic Day with pride and purpose at its campus on Kunigal Road. The celebration was held at the Dr. H. M. Gagadharaiah Circle, where Principal Dr. M. A. A. Nadakatti paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar before hoisting the national flag.

Addressing students and staff, the Principal said India has completed 77 years as a republic and now stands at an important stage in its development journey. He noted that the country faces many complex challenges, but these also create big opportunities for engineers and technicians to show their talent and responsibility.

He stressed the need for reliable power supply to support a fast-growing nation. He also spoke about saving water, using it wisely, and protecting the environment through sustainable solutions. Technology, he said, must help make healthcare more affordable and reachable for common people.

Dr. Nadakatti highlighted the importance of modern tools and technology in agriculture to improve productivity. He also underlined the need to protect India's fast-growing digital systems from security threats.

Calling for better cities, he said engineers must design places that are safe, green, less crowded and inclusive for all sections of society. He urged young engineers to develop a broad outlook while building digital systems that are innovative, accessible and secure.

Several faculty members and officials, including deans, principals of other institutions, NCC and NSS officers, department heads, and students, took part in the celebration, making the Republic Day event meaningful and inspiring for everyone present. The event ended with a renewed sense of duty among aspiring engineers and faculty.

Bhadra Upper River Project work progressing rapidly

A major drip irrigation project covering 73,946 hectares in Hiriyur, Chitradurga, Holalkere and Challakere taluks is also ready to begin

CHITRADURGA

Planning and Statistics Minister D. Sudhakar said work on the Bhadra Upper River Project, seen as a lifeline for Chitradurga district, is moving fast. He said water is expected to be released on a trial basis up to Gonur by February or March this year. Speaking after hoisting the national flag at the 77th Republic Day celebration at Government Science College grounds, he added that the government has promised Rs 200 crore to finish pending works. A major drip irrigation project covering 73,946 hectares in Hiriyur, Chitradurga, Holalkere and Challakere taluks is also ready to begin. He praised farmers, saying the district ranked first in the state by producing 48,682 tonnes of cereals in 2025-26. Through horticulture and minor irrigation schemes, thousands of farmers received facilities worth crores of rupees, he said.

Sudhakar noted that an industrial corridor near Metikurki in Hiriyur taluk will create jobs for local youth. Land has been handed over for the Davangere–Tumakuru direct railway line, and he expressed confidence that trains will run by December 2027. He said the Constitution guarantees equal opportunities even for the poorest and recalled the role of late leader S. Nijalingappa. Government guarantee schemes, he added, have improved daily life for many families.

During the event, the Minister distributed peak caps to police personnel, sports kits to schools, vehicle keys to beneficiaries and cash prizes to top SSLC students. Several officers and staff were honoured for dedicated service. A colourful parade by police, NCC, Scouts and school children, along with patriotic cultural performances, marked the celebrations. Citizens attended in large numbers, sharing pride, hope and unity on the national festival.

Three killed in accident on NH-48

TUMAKURU

Three people were killed in a tragic car lorry collision on National Highway 48 near Kunelahal in Tumakuru taluk on Monday. The victims were identified as Aniket, Abhir, and Sanmokti, aged between thirty five and forty four. All were employees of a private company in Bengaluru and originally from Uttar Pradesh. Police said the friends were returning to Bengaluru after a vacation when the accident occurred. Tumakuru Superintendent of Police K V Ashok visited the spot and inspected the scene. A case has been registered and further investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the accident later today.

Grand preparations ordered for Nayaknahatti Tipperudraswamy fair

CHITRADURGA

Minister D. Sudhakar has directed officials to make full preparations for the historic Nayaknahatti Sri Guru Tipperudraswamy Jatra Mahotsava, which will be held from February 27 to March 9. The grand chariot festival is scheduled for March 6, and lakhs of devotees from different states are expected to attend.

Speaking at a pre-preparation meeting held at the inner monastery in Nayaknahatti of Challakere taluk, the Minister stressed that there should be no lapses in arrangements. He said special care must be taken to provide drinking water, sanitation, medical aid, and crowd management facilities.

MLAs N.Y. Gopalakrishna and T. Raghumurthy assured full support. Gopalakrishna announced a grant of Rs 10 lakh for temple development and said he would personally provide the amount if government funds are delayed. Raghumurthy asked the Public Works Department to urgently repair potholes on roads leading to the town.

Deputy Commissioner T. Venkatesh said the temple route will be decorated with Mysuru Dasara-style lighting. BESCOM officials will prepare a lighting plan in coordination with the temple authorities. He added that animal sacrifice is strictly banned and awareness drives will be conducted.

Security will be strengthened with more permanent CCTV cameras and 40 to 50 temporary ones. Police will monitor the fair from a control room. Steps are also being taken to stop illegal liquor sales in nearby villages.

KSRTC will run extra buses, and a circular queue system will be introduced for smooth darshan. Cleaning of rooms, traffic control, and roadside bush cutting have also been ordered. Officials said the fair will be conducted with devotion, safety, and discipline for visiting devotees and pilgrims.

Auto drivers urged to follow traffic rules strictly

CHITRADURGA

MLA K.C. Veerendra Pappi appealed to auto drivers to strictly follow traffic rules to ensure smooth and safe movement in the city. Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the new Jai Bharat Commercial Auto Stand near APMC Market on Medehalli Road, he said that if drivers obey traffic regulations, nearly 90 percent of city traffic problems could be avoided.

"Traffic rules are not just guidelines; they are essential for public safety. Following them allows everyone to travel without trouble," Pappi emphasized. He also called for unity among auto drivers, urging them to maintain brotherhood across all stands in Chitradurga.

Recalling a recent tragedy, Pappi said, "A few months ago, a driver lost his life after spilling petrol in the city center. This is very regrettable. I will meet his family to offer my condolences."

District In-charge Minister D. Sudhakar, present at the program, assured that a proper auto stand system would be developed soon. "A slab will be installed on the drain, and a dedicated auto stand will be created to avoid public inconvenience. I will coordinate with the concerned departments to make this a reality," he said.

Chitradurga Urban Development Authority Chairman Taj Peer, leaders Manjunath Reddy, Sivalingappa, Anees, and Jai Bharat Commercial Auto Stand Chairman Laxman Naik, Vice Chairman Syed, along with office bearers Nagaraj, Shivakumar, Devaraj, Naveen, Ibrahim, Sasikumar, Harish, Rajanna, Manjunath, Lokesh, Prasanna, Manjanna, Jagdish, Krishna, and Riaz Basha were present at the event.

The foundation stone marks the beginning of a much-needed facility aimed at easing traffic congestion while providing a safer workspace for the city's auto drivers.

Republic Day marked with books and kindness

HARAPANAHALLI

The 77th Republic Day was celebrated in a meaningful and heartwarming way at Government Lower Primary School in Huchchangidurga Kote Camp of Harapanahalli taluk. The event was organized by the social service group "Humanity is Religion" with the message that humanity itself is the true religion.

Instead of a routine celebration, the day focused on helping children and supporting education. Members of the organization donated textbooks, school bags, stationery kits, and useful books for the school library. The gifts brought smiles to the faces of students, many of whom come from rural and economically weak families. The effort highlighted the importance of education in shaping a better future.

The program was guided by the founder of the organization, Suroj, while Executive President Ajay Nayak led the activities. Members including Kavita, Shweta, and Vidhi took part and helped distribute the materials to the children. Teachers, students, village elders, and local residents gathered to witness the special celebration.

SDMC President Karadi Parashuramappa, Headmistress Chandramma, and Ravi Nayak were present and appreciated the thoughtful initiative. Their presence added respect and encouragement to the program. Speaking on the occasion, Ajay Nayak said that serving people is the truest form of patriotism. He explained that education plants the seeds of nation building in young minds and helps children grow into responsible citizens.

The celebration turned Republic Day into more than a ceremony. It became a day of care, sharing, and hope for a brighter tomorrow. Villagers said such efforts inspire unity and remind everyone that small acts of kindness can build strong communities and a stronger nation for future generations to come.

Ramanagar court celebrates Republic Day

RAMANAGAR

The 77th Republic Day was celebrated with zeal at the Ramanagar court premises on Monday. District and Sessions Judge and Chairman of the Legal Services Authority, Justice M.H. Annayya, hoisted the national flag.

Speaking at the event, Justice Annayya highlighted India's democratic and secular values. "Our country ensures that people of all castes and religions have equal rights. The Constitution grants many fundamental freedoms, including education, equality, and freedom of speech," he said. He recalled that the Constitution Drafting Committee, chaired by Dr. Rajendra Prasad under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, prepared a document giving equality to all citizens. The Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, and came into force on January 26, 1950.

Justice Annayya explained the three pillars of the government—executive, legislature, and judiciary—and their roles. "The Constitution empowers citizens to question the government and administration. It is our duty to protect and uphold it," he said.

K. Kempaiah, President of the Bar Association, praised the Constitution as a model for the world, giving equality to people of all castes, communities, and races. He emphasized that India will prosper when the Constitution is respected and followed.

The program saw the presence of key judicial officers, including First Additional District Sessions Judge M. Panchakshari, CJM Judge Lokesh, Senior Judge and Member Secretary Savita P.R., JMFC, and Principal Senior Civil Judge Nivedita. Former Bar Association President B.M. Srivatsa, Vice President V.N. Jayaram, Secretary T.M. Chandrashekar, Treasurer H.D. Jyothi, senior advocates, lawyers, and court staff also attended. The celebrations included speeches honoring Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision and inspiring all to uphold the Constitution's values.

REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS

Patriotic fervor fills Chitradurga Medical College campus

CHITRADURGA

Republic Day was celebrated with pride at the District Hospital premises in Chitradurga, where Dr. B.Y. Yuvaraj, Director of Chitradurga Medical College and Research Institute, delivered a message on constitutional values after hoisting the national flag. Calling January 26 a golden day in Indian history, he said the country became a true republic when the Constitution came into force in 1950, guaranteeing equality, freedom, and justice to every citizen.

Dr. Yuvaraj reminded staff and students that independence in 1947 gave India freedom, but the Constitution gave the nation a strong democratic system. He said it is the duty of every citizen to respect and follow the ideals written in the Constitution. He also paid tribute to national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, and Bhagat Singh, along with soldiers guarding the borders.

Highlighting institutional progress, he said the medical college has achieved notable success in a short time. Students secured the second highest marks among medical colleges in Karnataka, helping the college reach seventh place at the state level. Plans are under way to introduce MD and MS postgraduate courses. Expansion of nursing and physiotherapy programmes is also being prepared at the new District Collector's Office Complex.

District Surgeon Dr. Ravindra S.P. urged hospital staff to dedicate themselves fully to public service. RMO Dr. Anand Prakash, Assistant Administrative Officer Shivuga Naik, Principal Rajaiah, and other medical staff attended the programme. Patriotic songs by nursing students and cultural performances added colour to the celebration, making the event both meaningful and memorable for everyone present. Officials said such events inspire unity, responsibility, and deeper respect for constitutional values.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Mohammed Shayan Sharif** Son of Enayathulla P aged about 18 years, residing at Peresandra Village, Mandikal Hobli, Chikkaballapura Taluk and District-562104. I have changed my name from **MOHAMED SAYAN SHAREEF** to **MOHAMMED SHAYAN SHARIF** for all purposes. Sworn before **K H Venkatappa,** Advocate & Notary, Chickballapura vide affidavit dated: 08/01/2026

QUICK READ

'Lower Central funds may hurt poor states'

Hyderabad
Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee on Monday said reduced central funding in the VB-G RAM G scheme could force poorer states to cut spending. Speaking at the Hyderabad Literary Festival, he said poorer states already spend less, and lower central support may worsen the problem. This, he added, would not help reduce poverty. Banerjee said the bill is still facing resistance, even within the ruling party, and may change. The Centre says the scheme supports the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Stalin calls for unified, not uniform India

Chennai
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Monday said Republic Day should celebrate a unified India, not a uniform one. In a message on social media, he said India's strength lies in its many cultures, languages and identities. Taking an indirect swipe at the Centre, Stalin said diversity helps the nation grow. He added that every citizen should live with dignity and freedom. Stressing inclusive growth, he said Tamil Nadu's progress would ensure no one is left behind.

Keep tourists away from Green Cave: Govt told

Raipur
The Chhattisgarh government has decided to open the rare and ecologically sensitive 'Green Cave' in Kanger Valley National Park in the once Maoist-affected Bastar district to tourists, a move that has drawn strong objections from scientists and experts. With Maoist activity in the region having significantly declined, the state is exploring ways to place more sites from Bastar on the national and international tourism map, viewing the Green Cave as a potential attraction. "The cave's inclusion would boost local employment opportunities and accelerate regional development. It will add a new dimension to tourism in the valley," State Forest Minister Kedar Kashyap said.

Jaishankar meets Canada's FM, vows to boost bilateral ties

NEW DELHI

India-Canada signal renewed engagement as foreign ministers discuss trade, technology, and security cooperation amid shifting global trade pressures and plans to expand bilateral commerce.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a productive conversation with Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand on Monday, focusing on strengthening India Canada relations. Jaishankar said the talks covered deeper cooperation, economic partnership, artificial intelligence, and continued high level exchanges, marking a positive step on Republic Day.

The discussion comes as Canada reassesses its trade choices amid global tensions. United States President Donald Trump has warned Canada against trade deals with China, while high tariffs affect several partners. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has urged citizens to buy Canadian and reduce reliance on risky external markets.

Carney has also said Canada will double non US exports over the next decade to protect jobs and open new opportunities. India is seen as a key partner in this effort. Indian High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Patnaik said Carney is expected to visit India in the coming weeks to expand trade ties after more than two years of strained relations.

Patnaik said the visit may follow India's Union Budget on February 1 and shows trust returning between the two sides. Both countries face heavy US tariffs, including fifty percent on Indian exports and thirty five percent on Canadian goods.

Earlier, Carney accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to visit India in early 2026. The two governments have restored high commissioners, agreed to boost diplomatic staff, and support people to people ties. India and Canada have also agreed to begin talks on a comprehensive trade pact aiming to raise trade to fifty billion dollars by 2030 as shared publicly.

'PM had to bow down, accept widespread demand for caste census'

NEW DELHI

Jairam Ramesh recalled that on April 28, 2024, PM Modi, in a television interview, had accused those seeking a caste census of possessing an 'urban Naxal mindset'.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Narendra Modi government, stating that the Prime Minister had earlier dismissed demands for a caste census, but was eventually forced to accept it due to widespread public pressure led by the opposition party.

In a post on X, Ramesh recalled that on April 28, 2024, Prime Minister Modi, in a television interview, had accused those seeking a caste census of possessing an "urban Naxal mindset". However, he said the Prime Minister later had to "bow down" to the growing demand for such an exercise, which the Congress had consistently raised."On April 28, 2024, the Prime Minister himself, in a television 'interview', accused those demanding a caste census of being afflicted with an 'urban Naxal mindset'. But it is clear that ultimately, the Prime Minister had to bow down and accept the widespread demand for a caste census, which the Indian National Congress had vociferously raised," Jairam Ramesh posted on 'X'.

He also outlined the 2027 Census schedule. He said Phase 1, which will be the House-listing and Housing Census, is scheduled for April to September 2026, with Phase 2, involving Population Enumeration, will be conducted in September 2026 in snow-bound regions including Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir, and in February 2027 in the rest of the country.

"The Phase-1 of the 2027 Census is scheduled to take place from April to September 2026. This will be the House-listing and Housing Census, the details of which have just been announced. The Phase-2 of the 2027 Census, that is, the Population Enumeration, is set for September 2026 in the snow-covered areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Ladakh, and Jammu & Kashmir, while it will occur in February 2027 in the rest of the country," he added.

Highlighting the policy reversal, Ramesh said that on April 30, 2025, the Modi government announced that a caste census would be included in the 2027 Census.

He pointed out that the government had earlier rejected the idea of a caste census in Parliament on July 20, 2021, and in an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court on September 21, 2021."On April 30, 2025, the Modi government, taking a complete U-turn, suddenly announced that the caste census would be included in the 2027 Census. Subsequently, on December 12, 2025, it was declared that the caste census would be part of Phase-2 of the 2027 Census. It is important to recall that until then, the Modi government had consistently rejected the idea of a caste census--as evidenced by (i) the response to a question in the Lok Sabha on July 20, 2021, and (ii) an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court on September 21, 2021," he said.

Kerala CM Urges Unity To Protect Constitution, Secularism

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday called for unity to defend India's Constitution, secularism, and federalism, while taking a veiled dig at the Centre on Republic Day.

In a Facebook post extending Republic Day greetings, Vijayan said the occasion reminded citizens of India's proud journey as a sovereign, democratic republic. He warned that conscious attempts were being made to undermine the principles of secularism and federalism enshrined in the Constitution.

He described the Constitution as more than a legal document, calling it the "soul of India" that celebrates diversity and guarantees equal justice for all. Vijayan said citizens must remain vigilant against forces attempting to weaken the vision of "unity in diversity" and impose a single ideology.

Highlighting federalism, he said a strong Centre with empowered states is facing challenges, with policies curtailing state finances and using constitutional institutions for political purposes. He emphasised the need to stand together against such moves.

Vijayan praised Kerala's alternative development models, which focus on decentralisation and people's participation, saying they strengthened the effort to protect constitutional values.

Calling for renewed commitment to secularism and democracy, he urged people to counter divisive politics with love and fraternity. "Let us move forward together in this struggle to protect India — for a New Kerala and a progressive India," he said, appealing for collective action to safeguard the nation's democratic ideals and unity in diversity.

Raut slams Padma for Koshyari, accuses him of toppling Uddhav govt

MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Monday condemned the Centre's decision to honour former Maharashtra governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari with Padma Bhushan, alleging that the latter had murdered democracy and the Constitution in the state by toppling the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government.

Speaking in Mumbai on Monday, the Shiv Sena UBT leader accused the Centre of rewarding someone who destroyed democratic values in Maharashtra. Raut said Koshyari played a direct role in toppling the Uddhav Thackeray led Maha Vikas Aghadi government and therefore did not deserve the civilian honour.

The Union government announced the Padma Bhushan for Koshyari on Sunday. He earlier served as Uttarakhand chief minister and was Maharashtra governor from 2019 to 2023. Raut said the Mahayuti government should also oppose the award. He named Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Deputy Chief Ministers Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde, saying they should condemn the decision.

Raut alleged that Koshyari insulted Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and social reformers Mahatma Phule and Savitribai Phule during his public life. He repeated that Koshyari had "murdered democracy and the Constitution" by acting against an elected government.

The Rajya Sabha member said the Supreme Court had already stated that Koshyari acted illegally while serving as governor. According to Raut, the former governor tried to remove a majority government to install a BJP led administration in the state.

Koshyari's tenure was marked by several controversies. Uddhav Thackeray had accused him of interfering in daily governance and acting beyond his role. He had also pointed out that the governor did not appoint members to twelve vacant Legislative Council seats despite state recommendations.

Koshyari also faced criticism for calling Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj an icon of old times. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Fadnavis congratulated Koshyari, praising his long public service and contribution to governance and nation building. Raut said such awards should honour integrity and public trust, warning that ignoring constitutional values would weaken faith in institutions and harm democracy nationwide in the long term.

Allahabad HC flags live-in trend, false rape cases

PRAYAGRAJ

The Allahabad High Court has observed that the growing trend of live-in relationships among youth is influenced by western ideas and often leads to criminal cases when such relationships fail. The court made the remarks while setting aside a life sentence awarded to a man accused of kidnapping and sexually assaulting a woman.

A division bench of Justice Siddharth and Justice Prashant Mishra allowed the appeal of Chandresh, noting that the woman was an adult and had entered a consensual relationship. The judges said FIRs alleging rape are frequently filed after breakups, while existing laws, framed earlier, often work against men in such cases.

According to the prosecution, Chandresh had taken away a minor girl on the promise of marriage and assaulted her. A trial court convicted him under IPC sections related to kidnapping, abduction, rape, the POCSO Act, and the SC/ST Act.

However, the High Court found that the woman was around 20 years old at the time, based on the ossification test report. It also noted contradictions in the mother's statements about the victim's age, suggesting changes were made on legal advice.

The bench observed that the woman travelled willingly with the accused by bus and train to Bangalore, lived with him for six months, and shared a consensual relationship. She contacted her family only after returning home.

The court ruled that convictions for kidnapping, rape, and POCSO were unjustified and set aside the sentence. The judgment stressed careful evidence review before imposing severe punishments.

NSS withdraws from proposed unity move with SNDP Yogam

KOTTAYAM

The proposed unity initiative between the Nair Service Society (NSS) and the SNDP Yogam has ended, with the NSS announcing its withdrawal on Monday.

The NSS said the decision was taken at a meeting of its director board in Perunna, a statement signed by general secretary G Sukumaran Nair said. The release noted that earlier attempts at NSS–SNDP Yogam unity had failed, and given the current political situation, a similar effort was unlikely to succeed.

Representing the Nair community, NSS said formal unity was impractical because it maintains equal distance from all political parties. The organisation, however, said it would continue to maintain friendly relations with SNDP Yogam, as it does with other community groups. "While cordial relations will continue, a formal unity move is not feasible at this time," the release added.

Reacting, SNDP Yogam general secretary Vellapally Natesan said he would review the NSS statement before commenting further. Earlier this month, both leaders had discussed unity publicly after jointly criticising Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan. Natesan was recently awarded the Padma Bhushan.

Nair told reporters that NSS suspected political motives behind the initiative. He noted that Natesan had proposed sending his son Tushar Vellapally, linked to the Bharath Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS), an NDA ally, to discuss the unity. "Their approach towards this unity move was suspicious," Nair said. He added that he personally proposed withdrawing from the initiative, which the director board later endorsed, effectively ending the talks between the two community organisations.

The announcement marks a clear pause in efforts to bring the Nair and Ezhava communities together under a formal unity framework.

Manali reels under snow, tourist surge

MANALI

Heavy snowfall across the western Himalayan region over the past 48 hours triggered widespread disruption in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Kashmir, leading to 15-km-long traffic jams near Manali, power outages, road blockages and large-scale stranding of tourists and residents.

In Himachal Pradesh, fresh snowfall ended a prolonged dry spell but severely affected daily life, particularly in tourist hubs such as Shimla and Manali.

Slippery roads and heavy tourist inflow during the long Republic Day weekend resulted in massive traffic snarls, with vehicles crawling for hours.

Over 600 tourists were stranded near Manali, many of whom spent the night inside their vehicles after traffic came to a standstill.

"We remained stuck in the traffic jam for more than three hours and then decided to walk our way to Manali, covering nearly 7 km," said Akshay, a tourist from Delhi. Another tourist, Trisha, said, "We had to spend the night in our vehicle and survived on maggi as we were carrying our own portable cylinder."

DIGNITY MATTERS

'Don't disclose rape survivor's identity in documents'

NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed city police not to reveal the name, parentage, or address of sexual assault survivors in any court documents or reports.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma asked the Delhi Police Commissioner to instruct all SHOs and investigating officers to strictly follow the law protecting survivors' identities. The order came while rejecting the bail plea of an accused in a POCSO case. The court noted that the victim's name had been mentioned in the police status report, which is a violation of legal rules.

The court instructed the Deputy Commissioner of Police in charge of the Moti Nagar area to sensitize all SHOs under his jurisdiction about protecting victim information. A copy of the judgment is to be sent to both the DCP and the Delhi Police Commissioner for compliance.

The case involves an accused who allegedly took a 12-13-year-old girl from her home in 2021 on a false pretext, confined her, and sexually assaulted her. She was later rescued by her family. The accused claimed he had a consensual relationship with the girl's mother and that the girl's allegations were false. He also argued that COVID-19 restrictions in 2021 made the alleged offence unlikely.

The court rejected these claims, saying the victim's clear and consistent statement could not be ignored. Her testimony was credible, and the mother's relationship with the accused did not affect the case.

The judgment emphasizes that protecting the identity of sexual assault survivors is mandatory and non-negotiable under the law.

INDIA SHOWCASES COMBAT-READY MILITARY MIGHT

NEW DELHI

India ushered in its 77th Republic Day on Monday with a grand display of its cultural diversity, economic growth, and military prowess that included missiles, warplanes, newly raised units and lethal weapon systems used during Operation Sindoor.

President of the European Council Antonio Costa and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen graced the celebrations as chief guests, marking a significant diplomatic moment alongside the military display.

Although the overarching theme of the event was 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', the Indian military's Operation Sindoor too found prominence at the parade on the Kartavya Path, the centrepiece boulevard of the national capital.

The parade commenced with the President Droupadi Murmu taking the salute shortly after she, Costa and von der Leyen, flanked by the Indian President's bodyguards, arrived at the Kartavya Path in a traditional buggy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, several other Union Ministers, the country's top military brass, foreign diplomats, and senior officials were among the spectators.

The major weapon systems displayed included BrahMos and Akash weapon systems, rocket launcher 'Suryastra', Main Battle Tank Arjun and an array of indigenously-built military platforms and hardware.

Cultural hues

Around 100 artistes heralded the parade, on the theme 'Vividata Mein Ekta (Unity in Diversity) that featured a grand presentation of musical instruments, demonstrating the nation's unity and rich cultural diversity.

The parade then began with President Murmu taking the salute. The parade was led by Parade Commander Lt General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area, a second-generation officer.

Tri-services tableau

A tri-services tableau showcasing replicas of major weapon systems deployed by the Indian military during Operation Sindoor in early May 2025 was a major attraction.

A glass-cased integrated operational centre, depicting the conduct of Operation Sindoor with the use of weapons systems such as BrahMos and S-400 missiles rolled down Kartavya Path.

For the first time, the parade showcased a phased 'Battle Array Format' of the Indian Army, including its aerial component. The recce element consisted of the 61 Cavalry in active combat uniform.

It was followed by a high mobility reconnaissance vehicle. Providing aerial support was the indigenous Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter and its armed version, Rudra, in Prahar formation, demonstrating battlefield shaping.

The combat elements then followed with T-90 Bhisma and Main Battle Tank Arjun rolling past the saluting dais with aerial support from Apache AH-64E and Prachand light combat helicopters.

Suryastra universal rocket launcher system

Among the major weapon systems showcased at the parade were Suryastra Universal Rocket Launcher System, Brahmos Supersonic cruise missiles and Akash missile systems.

The Indian Navy contingent comprised 144 young personnel, led by Lt Karan Nagyal as contingent commander, and Lt Pawan Kumar Gandi, Lt Priti Kumari and Lt Varun Dreveriya as platoon commanders.

It was followed by the Naval tableau, which featured a depiction of the circumnavigation route followed by INSV Tarini as part of the Navika Sagar Parikrama-II expedition.

The Indian Air Force contingent comprised four officers and 144 airmen. The contingent commander was Squadron Leader Jagdesh Kumar with Squadron Leader Nikita Choudhery, Flt Lt Prakhar Chandrakar and Flt Lt Dinesh as supernumerary officers.

30 tableaux

A total of 30 tableaux — 17 of States and Union Territories and 13 of various Ministries and departments — rolled down the Kartavya Path. The tableaux showcased a unique mix of 150 years of the national song 'Vande Mataram' and the national song 'Vande Mataram' and the nation's rapid progress.

A joint 'DareDevils' team of motorcycle riders drawn from the Central Reserve Police Force and the Sashastra Seema Bal enthralled the audience with their manoeuvres.

The aerial fly-past, one of the most eagerly awaited events of the parade, witnessed the participation of a total of 29 aircraft, including 16 fighter jets, four transport aircraft and nine helicopters.

These include Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29 and Jaguar aircraft, complemented by strategic assets - C-130 and C-295, as well as the Indian Navy's P-8i aircraft. The formations include Arjan, Vajraang, Varuna and Vijay.

QUICK READ

Colonel Sofiya to be conferred with Vishisht Sewa Medal

New Delhi

Colonel Sofyia Qureshi, who was a prominent face during the Operation Sindoor, has been named as a recipient of the Vishisht Seva Medal in the 2026 Republic Day honours list.

Sofiya Qureshi, along with Wing Commander Vyomika Singh and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, shared day-to-day details of the strikes that were carried out during Operation Sindoor.

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday approved gallantry awards for 70 Armed Forces personnel in recognition of their exceptional courage and sacrifice on the eve of the 77th Republic Day. The list includes six posthumous honours.

IOC depicts Op Sindoor which neutralised 100 terrorists

New Delhi

A glass-cased Integrated Operational Centre (IOC) showcasing the conduct of Operation Sindoor rolled down Kartavya Path during the 77th Republic Day parade on Monday. The display highlighted the success of the operation and the coordinated efforts of India's armed forces. The operation led to the neutralisation of over 100 terrorists and enemy soldiers, along with the destruction of key strategic assets, bringing the enemy to its knees within just 88 hours.

India showcases RUDRA, Apache, Prachand helicopters

New Delhi

As India celebrates its 77th Republic Day on Monday, the nation's battlefield prowess was on full display as the Army showcased its advanced attack helicopters, including RUDRA, Apache AH-64E, and the Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand, in a spectacular formation flight. The aerial demonstration highlighted India's growing capabilities to provide precise, lethal support to ground forces across diverse operational theatres. RUDRA, among India's foremost battlefield force multipliers, is especially effective when used in synergy with the Indian Air Force, missiles, and artillery.

DIPLOMACY MEETS FASHION: EU CHIEF STEALS THE SHOW IN SILK BROCADE OUTFIT

NEW DELHI: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen made a fashion and diplomatic statement by wearing an Indo-European fusion outfit as a chief guest at India's 77th Republic Day parade. Her choice of attire was noted as a graceful departure from her usual tailored pantsuits and was seen as a nod of respect and appreciation for Indian culture and heritage. Von der Leyen was seen in a maroon and gold Benarasi silk brocade bandhgala jacket paired with off-white trousers as she arrived for the parade on Monday morning.

What is Indian brocade?

Indian brocade is a luxurious fabric woven with a shuttle, featuring intricate, raised patterns made with gold/silver threads (zari) or coloured silk threads. This gives it an embroidered look without any actual stitching, making it perfect for opulent Indian attire like sarees, lehengas, and sherwanis. Banarasi styles are particularly famous for their stunning brocade work.

FOUR-LEGGED WARRIORS STEAL THE SHOW

NEW DELHI

India witnessed a rare spectacle on its 77th Republic Day when a specially curated animal contingent of the Indian Army's Remount and Veterinary Corps (RVC) marched down Kartavya Path, underscoring the indispensable role animals play in defending the country's most demanding frontiers.

It marked the first time such a diverse animal formation was presented during the national parade, drawing attention to a lesser-seen but vital dimension of military preparedness.

The contingent comprised two Bactrian camels, four Zanskar ponies, four trained raptors, ten Indian-breed Army dogs and six conventional military dogs currently in service.

Together, the formation symbolised a unique blend of legacy, operational innovation and growing self-reliance within the Army's ecosystem.

At the forefront were the robust Bactrian camels, recently inducted to support operations in the cold deserts of Ladakh.

Naturally suited to extreme cold, low oxygen levels and altitudes beyond 15,000 feet, these camels can carry loads of up to 250 kilograms while covering long distances with minimal water and feed.

Their induction has significantly strengthened logistical support and mounted patrolling capabilities along the Line of Actual Control, particularly in sandy terrain and steep gradients.

Marching alongside them were the Zanskar ponies, a rare indigenous mountain breed native to Ladakh.

Despite their relatively small size, these ponies are known for remarkable endurance, carrying loads between 40 and 60 kilograms over extended distances at altitudes exceeding 15,000 feet and in temperatures that can plunge to minus 40 degrees Celsius.

Inducted in 2020, they have since been deployed in some of the harshest operational zones, including the Siachen Glacier.

Beyond logistics, Zanskar ponies play a crucial role in mounted patrols, at times covering distances of up to 70-km in a single day, standing alongside soldiers in high-risk areas.

Enhancing the formation's operational edge were four raptors, deployed by the Army for bird-strike prevention and surveillance.

Their inclusion reflected the innovative use of natural abilities to enhance safety and situational awareness in sensitive operational environments.

A key highlight of the parade was the presence of Army dogs, often referred to as the 'Silent Warriors' of the Indian Army.

Bred, trained and cared for by the Remount and Veterinary Corps at the RVC Centre and College in Meerut, these dogs assist troops in counter-terrorism operations, explosive and mine detection, tracking, guarding, disaster response and search-and-rescue missions.

Over the years, Army dogs and their handlers have displayed extraordinary courage, earning gallantry awards and commendations for their combat roles as well as humanitarian operations.

Aligned with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and the Make in India initiative, the Army has increasingly inducted indigenous dog breeds such as Mudhol Hound, Rampur Hound, Chippiparai, Kombai and Rajapalayam.

Their participation in the Republic Day parade highlighted India's push towards self-reliance in defence and the successful integration of native breeds into specialised military roles.

As the animal contingent marched past the saluting dais on Republic Day 2026, it offered a powerful reminder that India's defence strength is built not only on machines and soldiers, but also on the quiet service of animals.

From the icy heights of Siachen and the cold deserts of Ladakh to disaster-hit civilian areas, these animals have shared the burden of duty, courage and sacrifice.

They marched as warriors on four legs, embodying resilience, loyalty and the Indian Army's unwavering commitment to protect the nation under all conditions.

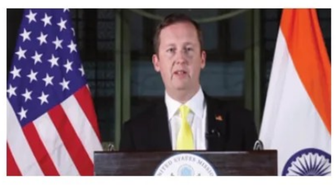
Thrilled to see US-made aircraft in Indian sky

NEW DELHI

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor on Monday extended greetings on the 77th Republic Day celebrations of India. He said that he was honoured to attend the Republic Day Parade for the first time and called the sight of the US-made aircraft flying in the "Indian sky" a powerful symbol of the growing US-India strategic partnership.

Through his official X post, the US Ambassador to India said, "Happy Republic Day, India! Honored to attend the Republic Day Parade for the first time, a celebration of India's Constitution and democratic spirit. Thrilled to see the US-made aircraft soaring in the Indian sky, a powerful symbol of the strength of the U.S.-India strategic partnership."

The Indian Air Force deployed around 20 fighter jets, including the Rafales, Su-30s, and Mirage 2000, along with the Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft, to create an aerial shield against any possible threat to the celebration of the 77th



Republic Day parade and associated events till January 30.

The deployments were part of the Republic Day celebrations, and the Indian Air Force has taken strong measures, especially as this is the first time the country's military grandeur has been showcased post Operation Sindoor. Senior defence officials spoke to ANI about how many of the fighter aircraft were carrying out combat air patrols while a number of them are in the Operational Readiness Platform mode, which means that the aircraft are ready to take off in two to three minutes while the pilots are in high alert mode.The fighter aircraft flying in air defence mode are capable of taking out any threat from enemy aircraft or drones.The Netra AEW&C aircraft & AWACS were also airborne and provided a complete picture of the adversaries' aerial activities from a very long range, along with ground-based radars that keep an eye on enemy activities 24x7.The aircraft has recently received Final Operational Clearance from the Indian Air Force.

A number of Mi-17 and other helicopters were also airborne and flew at some distance from the event venue, carrying commandos to take out any drones or other threats.The surface-to-air missiles, including the Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile systems, Army Air Defence anti-aircraft guns, Igla man-portable air defence systems, along with hand-held and vehicle-mounted counter-unmanned aerial systems, have been deployed to tackle any threat from drones or small aircraft.A highly sophisticated communication system under the IAF IACCS umbrella has been put in place to enable all security agencies dealing with aerial security threats to communicate in real time. It has been created for the parade to enable the authorities concerned to make quick decisions.

2,500 artists showcases 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'

NEW DELHI

A spectacular cultural display unfolded along the Kartavya Path in the heart of India's capital as part of the 77th Republic Day celebrations on Monday, with around 2,500 artists performing in a choreographed mixed dance to the tune of Vande Mataram. The performance was a key feature of this year's parade, marking the 150th anniversary of the iconic national song.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi watched eagerly as performers, dressed in vibrant attires representing various states and cultural traditions, presented India's cultural richness and unity. The dancers showcased folk and classical forms from across the country in a tribute to the enduring legacy of Vande Mataram, first written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1875 and later adopted as the national song.

The theme of the parade — "Swatantrata Ka Mantra-Vande Mataram" — infused the celebration with historic resonance, charting the song's journey from a rallying cry in India's freedom movement to a symbol of collective national identity.

The dancers performed before distinguished guests, including President Droupadi Murmu and visiting dignitaries such as European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, as the parade underscored both India's heritage and its contemporary diplomatic ties.

The annual Republic Day parade — one of the biggest patriotic events in India — blended cultural splendour with military precision. Alongside the cultural performances, military contingents and equipment marched down Kartavya Path, showcasing India's defence capabilities. The Indian Air Force flypast enthralled spectators with formations of Rafale, Su-30, MiG-29, and other aircraft.

Traditional music, band performances, and tableaux from 17 states and 13 ministries highlighted India's diversity and achievements. The parade also included a 21-gun salute and patriotic ceremonies that reaffirmed the Republic's values of democracy, unity, and progress.

India's Republic Day commemorates the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, when the nation transitioned to a republic. Held annually on 26 January at Kartavya Path, New Delhi, the parade is organised by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Culture and has been a tradition since the first celebration in 1950.

This year's parade gave special emphasis to the sesquicentenary of Vande Mataram, intertwining historical remembrance with expressions of artistic and martial pride.

QUICK READ

Explosion at Biscuit factory in Central Greece kills 3

ATHENS

A deadly fire broke out on Monday at a biscuit factory near the central Greek city of Trikala, killing at least three people and leaving two others missing, according to Greece's fire brigade. The incident followed a powerful explosion that tore through part of the industrial facility, sending thick black smoke billowing into the sky and prompting a large-scale emergency response. Firefighters said the explosion occurred inside the factory premises during working hours, quickly igniting a blaze that spread across the building. Flames were seen racing along the roof as dense smoke rose high above the surrounding area, visible from several kilometres away.

'Nobody is safe': Xi targets his close ally in purge

BEIJING

China's investigation into its top general is taking President Xi Jinping's years-long corruption purge into his innermost circle, underlining that even close personal ties do not offer protection when it comes to loyalty to the party leadership. China experts said Xi's move against his long-term ally and Politburo member Gen. Zhang Youxia also concentrates even more power in the president's hands, makes the already secretive command of China's military more opaque, and suggests that a near-term attack on Taiwan is less likely.

15 Dead, 28 missing as ferry sinks in Philippines

MANILA

A ferry with more than 350 people onboard sank Monday morning in the southern Philippines, leaving at least 15 dead and 28 still missing, the coast guard said. The MV Trisha Kerstin 3 issued a distress signal around 1:50 am (1750 GMT Sunday), a bit over four hours after it departed the Port of Zamboanga City on the southwestern tip of Mindanao, the coast guard said in a statement. At least 316 people had so far been rescued, Romel Dua, a coast guard commander, told AFP, with 15 confirmed dead and 28 still unaccounted for. The ferry went down about five kilometres east of Baluk-Baluk Island.

Minneapolis on boil: Trump admn defends fatal shooting

Trump defended his administration's aggressive immigration crackdown after a second fatal shooting by federal agents

MINNEAPOLIS

Officials in US President Donald Trump's administration defended the fatal shooting of a US citizen by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis, even as video footage recorded by bystanders appeared to contradict their official account.

The incident has intensified tensions between federal authorities and Minnesota's Democratic leadership, triggering renewed calls for limits on federal enforcement operations in the state.

The shooting occurred and resulted in the death of Alex Pretti, a U.S. citizen. As residents braved frigid temperatures and snowfall to visit a makeshift memorial of flowers and candles, federal officials insisted that immigration agents acted in self-defense.

According to the administration's account, Pretti assaulted officers, leaving them no option but to use lethal force.

However, videos captured by witnesses at the scene present a sharply different version of events. The footage shows Pretti holding only a cell phone before agents confronted him, forced him to the ground, and ultimately shot him at close range. The videos have circulated widely on social media, fuelling public outrage and raising questions about the use of force by federal officers.

Pretti's death marks the second fatal shooting of an American citizen by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis this month. The city has seen an unprecedented deployment of thousands of armed and masked federal agents as part of a broader deportation drive ordered by President Trump. Critics argue the operation has stretched legal boundaries and endangered civilians.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, a Democrat, again urged President Trump to withdraw federal agents from the state. Minnesota has asked a federal judge to restrain what it describes as unconstitutional excesses in the federal surge, citing interference with local law enforcement and civil rights concerns.

Despite mounting criticism, senior officials continued to defend the agents' actions. Gregory Bovino, a senior Border Patrol official, claimed on CNN's State of the Union that the true victims were federal officers. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem echoed that position, dismissing claims raised by local leaders and members of Congress.

'Invasion Day' rallies, anti-immigration stir mark Australia Day

SYDNEY

Australia Day commemorates the day Britain established the state of New South Wales as a penal colony, with the arrival in Sydney of ships bringing colonists and convicts.

Thousands of people across Australia marked the country's national day on Monday by participating in large-scale Invasion Day rallies, expressing solidarity with Indigenous Australians and renewing calls for unity, justice, and recognition.

At the same time, separate anti-immigration demonstrations were held in several cities, underscoring the deep divisions surrounding national identity, history, and social policy. Australia Day commemorates January 26, the day Britain established the state of New South Wales as a penal colony following the arrival of ships carrying colonists and convicts at Sydney Cove in 1788. While officially celebrated as a national holiday with ceremonies, fireworks, and citizenship events, the date remains deeply contentious for many Australians, particularly Indigenous communities.

For Indigenous Australians, who make up about four percent of the country's 27 million population, the day is widely referred to as Invasion Day. Protesters argue that it marks the beginning of widespread dispossession, violence, and the destruction of Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions following European settlement. Demonstrators at rallies carried Aboriginal flags, placards calling for treaty and truth-telling, and banners demanding that the national day be changed to a date that reflects unity rather than division.

Speakers at rallies across major cities including Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Perth emphasized the need for reconciliation and meaningful recognition of Indigenous history. Many called on the federal government to accelerate efforts toward constitutional recognition, treaties with First Nations peoples, and practical reforms to address ongoing disadvantages faced by Indigenous communities.

Alongside the Invasion Day rallies, smaller but vocal anti-immigration protests also drew crowds. Participants at these demonstrations expressed concerns about population growth, housing shortages, and the perceived impact of immigration on jobs and public services.

The contrasting protests highlighted the competing narratives shaping Australia's public debate on identity and belonging.

Russia using Interpol's wanted list to target critics abroad

MOSCOW

Thousands of files provided by a whistleblower at Interpol expose for the first time the extent of Russia's apparent abuse of the international policing agency to target its critics abroad.

The data provided to the BBC World Service and French investigative outlet, Disclose, reveals that Russia is using Interpol's wanted lists to request the arrest of people such as political opponents, businessmen and journalists, claiming that they have committed crimes.

Analysis of data also suggests that over the past decade, Interpol's own independent complaints unit has received more complaints about Russia than anyone else - three times more than the next highest country, Turkey.

In addition, it indicates complaints against Moscow's requests have led to more cases being overturned than for any other country.

After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Interpol introduced extra checks on Moscow's activity to prevent any potential misuse of Interpol's channels in relation to the targeting of individuals within or beyond the conflict in Ukraine.

17 dead, dozens missing after landslide buries village in Indonesia

JAKARTA

The death toll from a landslide that struck Indonesia's West Java province over the weekend has risen to 17, according to the country's disaster mitigation agency, as rescue teams continue searching for dozens of missing residents under difficult conditions. Authorities warned that ongoing heavy rainfall could further complicate recovery efforts in the coming days.

The landslide hit a residential area in the Bandung Barat region early after days of intense rainfall weakened soil on steep hillsides. The disaster agency said heavy rains began on Friday and triggered the collapse, sending large volumes of mud, rocks, and debris into nearby homes while residents were still inside. The impacted Pasir Langu village lies in a hilly part of West Java, about 100 kilometres southeast of Jakarta, Indonesia's capital. Officials said the area is particularly vulnerable to landslides during the rainy season due to its steep terrain and dense settlements built along unstable slopes.

More than 30 houses were buried by the landslide, leaving families trapped and cutting off access routes. Search and rescue teams, supported by local volunteers, have been working around the clock using heavy machinery and manual tools to locate survivors. However, unstable ground conditions and the risk of further landslides have slowed operations.

At least 17 people have died, with 73 still missing, disaster agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari told Reuters on Monday. He added that the number of casualties could rise as rescuers reach areas that remain inaccessible. Emergency shelters have been set up for displaced residents, while aid including food, blankets, and medical supplies is being distributed.

Indonesia's meteorological agency has warned that heavy rainfall is expected to continue in West Java and several other regions for at least another week. Authorities have urged residents in landslide-prone zones to remain alert and follow evacuation orders if conditions worsen.

Landslides are common in Indonesia during the rainy season, particularly in mountainous and hilly regions. Experts say deforestation, poor land management, and unregulated construction have increased the risk of such disasters in recent years.

7 dead, 8L without power as winter storm sweeps US

NEW YORK

A dangerous winter storm has swept across the US, leaving at least seven people dead and cutting power to hundreds of thousands of homes. Schools and roads across the country have been closed and flights have been cancelled as life threatening conditions stretched from Texas to New England, according to the National Weather Service (NWS). At least two people died of hypothermia in Louisiana, and other deaths linked to the storm have been reported in Texas, Tennessee and Kansas. More than 800,000 households had lost power, according to poweroutage.us. Meanwhile, more than 11,000 flights were cancelled, FlightAware reported. Widespread heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain, which is a dangerous phenomenon where cooled rain droplets freeze instantly on surfaces, could last for days, and the storm could affect around 180 million Americans - more than half the population. The snow and the ice will be very, very slow to melt and won't be going away anytime soon, and that's going to hinder any recovery efforts, Allison Santorelli, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. Louisiana's Department of Health confirmed that two men had died of hypothermia. The mayor of Austin, Texas, said there had been an exposure-related death. Officials in Kansas said a woman, whose body was found covered in snow, may have succumbed to hypothermia.

South Korea seeks nuke-powered submarines to strengthen deterrence

SEOUL

The United States and South Korea have agreed to deepen cooperation on Seoul's pursuit of a nuclear-powered submarine, signalling a shift toward greater South Korean leadership in regional security and deterrence against North Korea. The agreement was reached during talks in Seoul on Monday between Elbridge Colby, the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and Ahn Gyu-back, South Korea's Defence Minister, according to the South Korean defence ministry.

Colby is visiting Seoul on his first overseas trip since taking up the post, at a time when Washington is openly signalling that it expects South Korea to assume a more prominent role in deterring threats from North Korea. In a statement, the ministry said both sides agreed that cooperation on a nuclear-powered submarine would strengthen South Korea's capacity to lead the defence of the Korean Peninsula and further elevate the bilateral security alliance.

The discussions come shortly after the Pentagon released its new National Defense Strategy on Friday. The document states that the United States anticipates a more limited role in deterring North Korea in the future, with South Korea expected to take primary responsibility for its own defence. Analysts see this as part of a broader U.S. effort to rebalance military commitments globally while encouraging allies to shoulder more of the security burden.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	7			3	5			1
8		1	9				5	
	9			6		2		7
9		7		5	3		1	
	8		7		6	5		9
6		5		1			4	
	5		6		2	1		4
7		2		9			6	
	6		5		1	3		2

1	6	2	8	9	7	5	3	4
5	9	3	4	1	6	8	7	2
8	4	7	2	5	3	6	1	9
9	3	8	1	7	2	4	5	6
7	1	5	6	4	8	9	2	3
6	2	4	5	3	9	1	8	7
3	8	9	7	6	5	2	4	1
4	5	6	3	2	1	7	9	8
2	7	1	9	8	4	3	6	5

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

END OF PANDA DIPLOMACY

Japan returns pandas to China amid strained ties

TOKYO

Thousands of people flocked to a zoo in Japan to say farewell to the country's last two giant pandas, who are set to return to China on Tuesday.

Emotions ran high at the Ueno zoo in Tokyo as people stood in line some for as long as three-and-a-half hours, to see twin cubs Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei one last time.

This comes at a very tense moment in relations between Tokyo and Beijing. Ties have sharply deteriorated after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said Tokyo would get involved militarily if China attacked Taiwan. The twins' departure will leave Japan without any pandas for the first time since 1972, the year the two countries normalised diplomatic ties. The People's Republic of China has used giant pandas as a gesture of goodwill towards its international allies and competitors since it was founded in 1949.

But China retains ownership of all pandas it loans to foreign countries, including cubs born abroad. In return, host countries pay an annual fee of about $1m (£790,000) per pair of pandas.

According to Tokyo's metropolitan government, some 108,000 people vied to get one of the 4,400 slots available for one last look at the zoo's beloved pandas.

I have been bringing my son here since he was a baby, so I hope it becomes a good memory for him. I'm glad we could come today to remember them. Another woman recalled witnessing the pandas' growth journey. Witnessing their growth, especially since they were so small, has been such a joy, she said.

Some visitors were pictured sobbing as they bade the bears goodbye. Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei were born in 2021 at the Ueno zoo to their mother Shin Shin and their father Ri Ri, both of whom were on loan to Japan for breeding research. More recently, China's panda loans have coincided with major trade agreements. In 2011, the loan of two pandas to Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland was agreed during negotiations over contracts to supply salmon meat, Land Rover vehicles and energy technology to China.

QUICK READ

Strong demand for Dreamliner in India, says Boeing

Washington

US aircraft manufacturer Boeing is expecting strong demand for its Dreamliner aircraft in India. In an interview with news agency PTI, Boeing India and South Asia President Salil Gupte said the Boeing 787 Dreamliner has a very promising future in India. He said the company is hopeful of receiving more orders for the wide-body aircraft as the market continues to grow. Gupte added that global demand for the 787 has been very strong and that Boeing expects this trend to continue in the coming years. Last year, the company delivered 14 Dreamliner aircraft to different airlines worldwide.

UBS warns on India equities: Flags weak GDP, AI lag

Mumbai

Global brokerage UBS has reiterated its underweight stance on Indian equities, citing weak nominal GDP momentum, stretched valuations and a lack of clear artificial intelligence (AI) beneficiaries, even as it strikes a more constructive tone on the rest of the emerging markets (EMs). In a note synthesising its strongest views across the 22 largest EM economies, the global brokerage said India continues to lag on several fundamental metrics despite a sharp underperformance versus the broader EM universe in 2025. UBS pointed to slowing nominal growth trends, weaker MSCI India fundamentals relative to peers, and valuation premiums that remain elevated by historical standards.

RUSSIA EYES INDIAN WORKFORCE TO TACKLE LABOUR CRUNCH

The move reflects Moscow's growing reliance on foreign labour as demographic pressures and workforce gaps continue to strain its economy

NEW DELHI

As Russia looks to address acute labour shortages across several sectors, a new report has indicated that at least 40,000 Indian citizens are expected to travel to Russia this year for employment.

The move reflects Moscow's growing reliance on foreign labour as demographic pressures and workforce gaps continue to strain its economy.

According to a report published on DW's website, between 70,000 and 80,000 Indian citizens were already working in Russia by the end of last year. The number is expected to rise significantly following the signing of two bilateral agreements between India and Russia in December. These agreements aim to boost the mobility of Indian semi-skilled and skilled workers.

The two pacts, titled Temporary Labour Activity of Citizens of One State in the Territory of the Other State and

Cooperation in Combating Irregular Migration, are designed to create a formal framework for employment while protecting workers from exploitation. The agreements are expected to prevent a repeat of past incidents in which Indian workers reportedly fell victim to recruitment fraud and misleading job promises.

Public attention has recently focused on the case of a young Indian software professional who was found working on the streets of Russia, highlighting the risks faced by migrant workers. He was among 17 Indian nationals who had arrived in St. Petersburg several months ago to help address labour shortages in municipal road maintenance. According to a report by Fontanka, the workers were recruited by a Russian road maintenance company, Kolomyazhskoye, and assigned to street-cleaning and winter road maintenance duties.

Labour shortages in several parts of Russia have reportedly increased demand for migrant workers, particularly in manual labour, construction, and municipal services. Analysts say the trend is likely to continue as Russia struggles to fill vacancies domestically. Meanwhile, India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has highlighted the strength of India's entrepreneurial and workforce ecosystem.

Key factors driving reliance on foreign labour

Russia is experiencing a severe labour shortage, with estimates indicating a deficit of approximately 2.2 to 2.6 million workers in 2024–2025, a gap projected to exceed 3 million by 2030

* **Wartime economic strain:** The shift toward a defense-focused economy has created immense demand for labor in manufacturing and, to a lesser extent, construction, which the domestic market cannot satisfy.

* **Declining migrant influx:** Following tighter immigration policies, including restrictions on workers from Central Asia in certain regions, Russia is diversifying its search for labor.

* **Strategic Shift to South Asia:** To fill these gaps, Russia is actively courting workers from India, with plans to recruit up to 1 million, alongside workers from Myanmar, Nepal, and Vietnam.

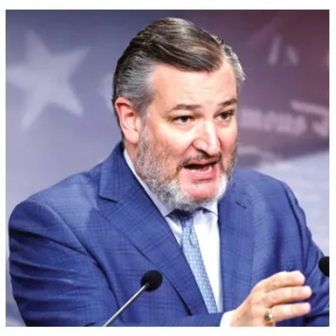
* **Record-low unemployment:** Unemployment has dropped to a historic low (approximately 2.1%–2.7%), meaning almost all available, qualified, and willing residents are already employed.

Economic consequences & measures

* **Wage inflation:** The scarcity of workers has led to rapid wage growth, which is contributing to inflationary pressures.

* **Industrial bottlenecks:** Industries like metallurgy and defense, particularly in the Ural region, are struggling to meet production demands due to the lack of personnel.

* **Alternative labour sources:** Companies are increasingly forced to turn to teenagers, retirees, and inmates to fill positions.



'Vance, Navarro, even Trump stalled trade deal with India'

WASHINGTON

United States (US) Senator Ted Cruz blamed Vice President JD Vance, White House Economic Adviser Peter Navarro, and at times even President Donald Trump for slowing down trade talks with India. According to an Axios report, Cruz made these remarks in a private conversation with donors that lasted nearly 10 minutes. The recording was shared by a Republican source and dates back to early and mid-2025. In the recording, Cruz openly speaks about internal disagreements within the administration over trade policy. According to the report, Cruz named Navarro and Vice President Vance for battling the White House to accept a trade agreement with India.

Assam's economy surged past national average: CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday underscored the state's rapid economic transformation, expanding global engagement and strong commitment to constitutional values while leading Assam's 77th Republic Day celebrations.

The event was held at the Khanikar Parade Ground in Dibrugarh, drawing government officials, security personnel, students and citizens from across the region.

Addressing the gathering, Sarma highlighted Assam's accelerating economic momentum, citing data from the Reserve Bank of India to claim that the state's growth rate has surpassed the national average. He said Assam's Gross Domestic Product is currently expanding at an annual rate of 13 to 15% and is projected to reach Rs 10 lakh crore by 2027. According to the Chief Minister, this trajectory places Assam among the fastest-growing states in the country.

'The state's GDP is currently expanding at an annual rate of 13 to 15% and is projected to reach Rs 10 lakh cr by 2027'

Sarma described Assam's first-ever participation at the World Economic Forum as a historic milestone, symbolising the state's shift from being a historically underdeveloped region to a globally connected and investment-ready destination. He said the engagement reflected rising confidence among national and international investors in Assam's long-term economic potential.

Reviewing achievements over the past five years, the Chief Minister said Assam has recorded notable progress across multiple sectors, including employment generation, healthcare delivery, cultural promotion and peace-building initiatives. He stressed that sustained development has gone hand in hand with efforts to ensure stability and social harmony in the state.

Highlighting Assam's cultural resurgence, Sarma noted that traditional dance forms such as Bihu, Jhumoir and Bagurumba have gained international recognition. He also pointed out that the Assamese language has been accorded classical language status, calling it a moment of pride for the state's people and a recognition of its rich literary and cultural heritage.

Pak survives on bailouts, strategic support

NEW DELHI

Pakistan's economy continues to survive on external support rather than real reform, as policymakers rely on foreign borrowing and strategic alliances to avoid repeated financial collapse, a report has said. For decades, Pakistan has faced recurring economic crises, only to be rescued each time by foreign creditors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or friendly nations, according to an analysis by Sakariya Kareem.

Instead of building a competitive export-driven economy, the country has depended on rolling over debt and securing bailouts.

This pattern has created what analysts describe as survival without reform, where the system stays afloat but never fundamentally improves, as per report by Asian Lite. A key issue is Pakistan's currency policy. The government continues to artificially support the rupee to keep imports cheap, especially fuel and essential goods.

This approach requires borrowing foreign exchange rather than earning it through exports. As a result, the economy remains weak and unproductive. Interest payments on public debt now consume nearly two-thirds of government revenue, leaving very little money for education, healthcare, or infrastructure.

Whenever oil prices rise or foreign funding slows, foreign exchange reserves fall sharply and the economy slips back into crisis.

The depth of the problem became clear in mid-2023, when Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves dropped below $4 billion, barely enough to cover two weeks of imports.

Seoul shares snap 3-day rise ahead of Fed rate decision

SEOUL

South Korean stocks closed lower on Monday to snap three consecutive days of rise ahead of a U.S. rate-setting meeting, with investors sitting on the sidelines amid geopolitical uncertainties in Iran. The Korean won sharply gained against the U.S. dollar, and the tech-laden KOSDAQ surged by more than 7 percent to land above 1,000 for the first time in more than four years. The benchmark Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) fell 40.48 points, or 0.81 percent, to close at 4,949.59.

The KOSPI has been enjoying decent gains this year while moving above the 5,000-point threshold since Thursday last week, although the index has not yet closed above the mark.

Trade volume was moderate at 438 million shares worth 22.5 trillion won (US$15.6 billion), with winners far outpacing losers 502 to 391.

Institutions and foreigners sold 158.4 billion won and 1.54 trillion won, respectively, while individuals bought a net 1.71 billion won.

Analysts said investors took a wait-and-see approach to this week's events, such as the Federal Reserve's rate decision and the release of fourth-quarter earnings by major firms, including Samsung Electronics and SK hynix.

Looming geopolitical tensions between the United States and Iran, along with Washington's ambition over Greenland, weighed on investor sentiment as well.

The rosy outlook for fourth-quarter earnings of semiconductor shares have already priced in recent gains, Han Ji-young, a researcher at Kiwoom Securities, said.

Investors should focus on companies' conference calls, which will unveil their road map for HBM4 chips and supply of general-purpose memory, Han added.

Police probe expands in Coupang data breach

SEOUL

South Korean police on Monday said personal information belonging to more than 30 million Coupang customers is believed to have been leaked, significantly expanding a data breach investigation and raising the prospect of legal action against the company's interim chief executive.

Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency chief Park Jeong-bo told a media briefing that investigators believe data from over 30 million accounts may have been stolen, contradicting Coupang's earlier assertion that only about 3,000 users were affected. The exact volume of leaked data has not been confirmed, but police said their forensic analysis indicates a far wider breach.

Park also questioned whether Coupang may have intentionally downplayed the scale of the incident in its internal investigation. Authorities are examining whether the company's public disclosures accurately reflected the seriousness of the breach.

Coupang said on December 25 that a former employee stole personal data from millions of users, but claimed damage was limited. Police are now challenging that assessment. Investigators continue.

'I choose the path of karma...will make India even greater...'

NEW DELHI

Veteran banker and industrialist Uday Kotak on Monday said he was humbled and honoured to be conferred the Padma Bhushan. The government announced the Padma Awards on the eve of Republic Day, with Kotak being conferred the Padma Bhushan for his exceptional contribution to the financial sector.

The India of today is unrecognisable from the one I was born in. The journey has been exhilarating. On this Republic Day, we stand at the fork of many roads, Kotak posted on X.

He further stated "I choose the path of karma with a sense of paranoia, with aspiration but conscious of ground realities. I have deep conviction that we, the people will make India even greater. We have miles to go before we sleep."

The Padma Bhushan recognised Kotak's lasting impact on India's banking and financial landscape and his role in shaping a strong and credible private financial institution in the post-liberalisation era.

Kotak's journey is seen as one of the most remarkable success stories in India's financial sector. In the early 1990s, Kotak Finance expanded into areas such as auto loans, investment banking and stockbroking at a time when India was opening up its economy.

The timing proved crucial, as economic liberalisation in 1991 created new opportunities for private financial institutions. When Kotak started out, he did not come from a well-known business family and did not have the backing of large investors.

Many potential clients were hesitant to trust a new company with their money. Despite these challenges, Kotak focused on building his business on principles of honesty, transparency and low-risk lending.

INDIA-EU TRADE DEAL

Car import tariffs to drop from 110% to 40%

NEW DELHI

India is preparing to sharply reduce import duties on cars from the European Union as part of a long-pending free trade agreement, according to reports.

The announcement could come as early as Tuesday, signalling a breakthrough in negotiations that have remained stalled for years.

Under the proposed agreement, India plans to bring down peak import tariffs on EU-made cars to 40% from the current levels of up to 110 per cent. If implemented, this would represent the biggest opening so far of India's tightly protected automobile market, which has long been shielded by some of the world's highest import duties.

Initially, the lower duty structure will apply only to a limited number of fully built cars priced above 15,000 euros, or roughly Rs 16.3 lakh. Sources said that India has agreed to immediately cut duties on around 2 lakh internal combustion engine vehicles each year, though the final quota may still be revised during formal approval.

Over time, these tariffs are expected to be reduced further, potentially to as low as 10 per cent. Such a move would significantly improve market access for European automakers and reshape competition in India's premium and luxury car segments.

The proposed cuts will make it easier for European manufacturers such as Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW to sell imported vehicles in India at more competitive prices. Lower import taxes will also allow these companies to test new models in the Indian market before committing to additional local manufacturing investments.

Electric vehicles, however, will not benefit from the reduced tariffs during the first five years of the agreement. The government is keen to protect investments made by domestic EV manufacturers, though similar duty cuts for electric cars are expected to be considered at a later stage.

India and the EU are likely to announce the conclusion of negotiations for the comprehensive free trade agreement, marking the end of years of on-and-off talks. While the announcement would be a significant milestone, the deal will still need to be finalised and approved by both sides before it can come into force.

Is Civic Sense India's Biggest Problem?

When we walk through Indian cities, certain scenes have become painfully familiar: garbage piled on street corners despite bins nearby, vehicles honking incessantly in traffic jams, people jumping queues without hesitation, and public spaces defaced with gutka stains and graffiti. These everyday observations have led many to declare that lack of civic sense is India's biggest problem. But is this assessment accurate, or does it oversimplify a complex web of challenges facing the nation? The question demands careful consideration because while civic sense issues are undeniably visible and frustrating, India faces numerous other critical challenges including poverty, unemployment, healthcare inadequacy, and educational disparities. To understand whether civic sense truly represents the nation's paramount concern, we must examine what civic sense means, how its absence manifests in India, why it persists, and whether it deserves the title of our biggest problem.

Understanding Civic Sense in the Indian Context

Civic sense refers to the social ethics and behavior that citizens exhibit toward their community and fellow residents. It encompasses respect for public property, adherence to traffic rules, maintaining cleanliness in shared spaces, queuing discipline, noise regulation, and generally conducting oneself in ways that don't inconvenience others or damage common resources.

In India, the deficit of civic sense manifests in countless ways. Our streets are littered despite the presence of dustbins. People spit in public spaces without hesitation. Traffic rules are treated as mere suggestions rather than mandatory regulations. Public walls become canvases for urination and advertisements. Queue-jumping is so common that organized lines often feel like a rarity rather than the norm. Parks and monuments are vandalized with carved names and discarded waste. The list continues endlessly.

The Real-World Impact of Poor Civic Sense

The consequences of inadequate civic sense extend far beyond mere aesthetic displeasure. When citizens litter indiscriminately, drainage systems clog, creating waterlogging during monsoons and breeding grounds for disease-carrying mosquitoes. The resulting health crises strain an already overburdened healthcare system and claim lives through preventable diseases like dengue and malaria.

Traffic indiscipline costs India dearly. According to various estimates, traffic congestion in major cities results in billions of dollars in lost productivity annually. More tragically, India accounts for a disproportionately high number of road accident fatalities globally, with poor road discipline being a significant contributing factor. Each violation, from running red lights to wrong-side driving, potentially puts lives at risk.

The economic implications are substantial. Poor civic sense directly impacts India's tourism potential. Visitors often express shock at the filth in areas surrounding even our most magnificent historical monuments.

The contrast between the grandeur of the Taj Mahal and the garbage-strewn areas nearby has become an unfortunate cliché. This damages India's image and costs the economy valuable tourism revenue.

Public infrastructure deteriorates faster when citizens don't respect it. Railway coaches, bus stations, public toilets, and parks require constant repair and maintenance because of misuse and vandalism. These resources could be better utilized for development rather than perpetual restoration.

Understanding the problem requires examining its underlying causes, which are multi-faceted and deeply rooted in social, historical, and institutional factors.

The Root Causes: Why Does India Struggle with Civic Sense?

Colonial Legacy and Public-Private Divide: One argument suggests that colonial rule created a psychological division between private and public spaces. Under foreign rule, anything belonging to the government was seen as belonging to them rather than us. This mindset persisted post-independence, with many Indians meticulously maintaining their homes while showing complete disregard for public spaces. The concept of public property being collectively owned and therefore deserving of care never fully took root in the mass consciousness.

Population Pressure and Resource Scarcity: India's enormous population creates unique challenges. With limited public resources stretched thin, the tragedy of the commons plays out daily. When one person sees hundreds of others littering, the individual impact of their own waste seems negligible. Similarly, when public infrastructure is perpetually overcrowded, the urgency to follow queuing discipline diminishes.

Weak Enforcement Mechanisms: Laws exist on paper, but enforcement remains sporadic and ineffective. Traffic violations, littering, and public urination carry penalties, but the probability of facing consequences is low. When people see others breaking rules without repercussions, it normalizes such behavior. Corruption further weakens the system, as those caught violating rules can often negotiate their way out.

Educational Gaps: While Indian education emphasizes academic achievement, civic education receives inadequate attention. Schools rarely instill a genuine understanding of civic responsibility beyond textbook lessons. The disconnect between what is taught and what students observe in daily life creates cynicism rather than conviction.

Socioeconomic Factors: For millions struggling with basic survival, civic sense understandably takes a backseat. When someone lacks access to proper sanitation facilities, public urination becomes necessity rather than choice. When waste collection systems don't reach certain neighborhoods, littering becomes the only option. Poverty doesn't excuse poor civic behavior, but it explains some of it.

The Counter-Argument: Is Civic Sense Really Our Biggest Problem?

While the lack of civic sense is problematic, calling it India's biggest problem requires scrutiny. This claim potentially overshadows more fundamental challenges that demand urgent attention.

Poverty and Inequality: Over two hundred million Indians still live below the poverty line. Millions lack access to basic nutrition, clean drinking water, and adequate shelter. Child malnutrition rates remain alarmingly high. When compared to these existential challenges, civic sense appears almost luxurious as a concern. A person worried about their next meal has different priorities than someone concerned about littering.

Healthcare Crisis: India's healthcare system struggles with inadequate infrastructure, shortage of medical professionals, and prohibitive costs that push families into poverty when serious illnesses strike. The COVID-19 pandemic starkly exposed these vulnerabilities. This crisis arguably deserves more urgent attention than civic sense.

Unemployment and Underemployment: Millions of educated youth cannot find suitable employment. The demographic dividend that India should be leveraging risks becoming a demographic disaster if job creation doesn't accelerate. This economic challenge threatens social stability and national progress more immediately than civic sense issues.

Educational Quality: While enrollment rates have improved, educational quality remains problematic. Many students complete schooling without acquiring basic competencies. This human capital crisis has long-term implications for India's development that potentially outweigh civic sense concerns.

Moreover, the biggest problem framing itself is problematic because India's challenges are interconnected rather than hierarchical.

Poor civic sense both results from and contributes to other problems. A person without proper sanitation facilities cannot be expected to maintain public cleanliness standards. A population struggling with basic education may not fully grasp civic responsibilities.

Conclusion

Is civic sense India's biggest problem? The answer is nuanced. It is certainly a significant and visible problem that affects daily life quality, economic efficiency, and national image. The cascading effects of poor civic sense touch healthcare, environment, economy, and social harmony. Addressing it would yield multiple benefits across sectors.

However, calling it the biggest problem risks overlooking more fundamental challenges of poverty, healthcare, education, and employment that affect human dignity and survival more directly.

Furthermore, civic sense issues are often symptoms of these deeper problems rather than standalone concerns. Perhaps the more productive approach is recognizing that civic sense, while not necessarily the biggest problem, is the most solvable problem where individual action can create immediate, visible impact. Unlike poverty or healthcare reform, which require massive governmental intervention and resources, civic sense improvement can begin with individual choices multiplied across millions of people. India's path forward requires addressing multiple challenges simultaneously rather than seeking a single biggest problem to solve. Civic sense deserves serious attention and sustained effort, not because it trumps all other concerns, but because improving it creates ripple effects that make addressing other challenges easier. A citizenry that respects public property, follows rules, and considers collective welfare creates the foundation for broader social and economic progress.

The question, therefore, isn't whether civic sense is our biggest problem, but whether we're willing to make it a priority worth solving, not instead of other challenges, but alongside them, recognizing that building a better India requires both systemic reform and individual responsibility working in concert.

Musetti Stuns Fritz to Reach First Australian Open Quarterfinal

MELBOURNE

Fifth seed Lorenzo Musetti produced a masterful performance at Australian Open, defeating American Taylor Fritz 6-2, 7-5, 6-4 at Rod Laver Arena to reach the quarterfinals for the first time in his career. The victory sets up a highly anticipated quarterfinal showdown against 10-time champion Novak Djokovic.

Musetti, who had endured a gruelling five-set battle against Tomas Machac in the previous round, showed no signs of fatigue as he dismantled Fritz with a blend of power, precision and flair. The Italian broke Fritz's powerful serve twice in the opening set, racing to a 6-2 lead and immediately putting the American under pressure.

Italy's Lorenzo Musetti defeated Taylor Fritz in straight sets to reach his first Australian Open quarterfinal, setting up a blockbuster clash.

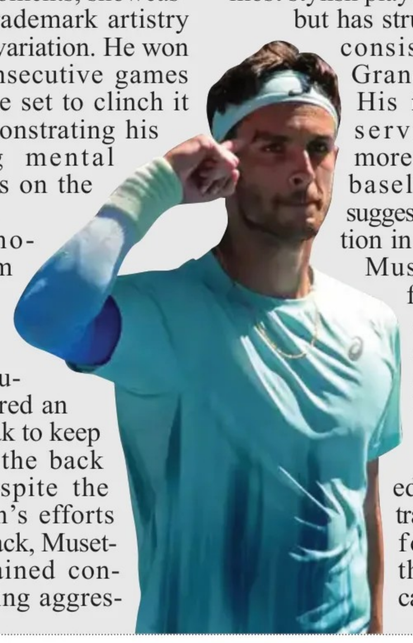
In the second set, Fritz attempted to mount a comeback, using his big serve and forehand to stay competitive. However, Musetti raised his level at the crucial moments, showcasing his trademark artistry and shot variation. He won three consecutive games late in the set to clinch it 7-5, demonstrating his growing mental toughness on the big stage.

The momentum carried into the third set, where Musetti secured an early break to keep Fritz on the back foot. Despite the American's efforts to fight back, Musetti maintained control, mixing aggressive forehands with delicate drop shots and defensive brilliance. He closed out the match 6-4 with composed serving and intelligent point construction, sealing one of the biggest wins of his career.

Reflecting on the victory, Musetti said he was proud of his performance and acknowledged his rivalry with Fritz. Honestly, I feel very proud. I know Taylor very well, we've played many matches, many battles. And last time in Turin he was the winner, he said, referring to their meeting at the ATP Finals last year.

I came here with a different mentality and I think I made one of my best performances. I improved a lot on serve and especially being a little bit more aggressive with the forehand and trying to use my variations, Musetti added.

The win marks a major milestone for the 21-year-old Italian, who has long been regarded as one of the most stylish players on tour but has struggled for consistency at Grand Slams. His improved serving and more assertive baseline play suggest a maturation in his game. Musetti now faces an enormous challenge against Djokovic, who has dominated the Australian Open for more than a decade.



Pelicans Rally Past Spurs as Warriors Dominate Timberwolves

New Orleans stunned San Antonio with a late surge, while Golden State cruised past Minnesota

SAN ANTONIO

The NBA highlighted by clutch performances from New Orleans Pelicans stars and a commanding road win by the Golden State Warriors.

In San Antonio, Saddiq Bey and Zion Williamson scored 24 points each and knocked down crucial free throws in the closing moments as New Orleans stunned the host San Antonio Spurs 104-95. The Pelicans erased a tight contest with a dominant second half, building a sizeable lead before finishing strongly to secure the victory.

Bey and Williamson were equally effective on the boards, each grabbing 10 rebounds to record double-doubles. Trey Murphy III added 17 points, providing key perimeter scoring, while rookie Yves Missi chipped in with 10 points and 14 rebounds to anchor the interior.

For San Antonio, rising star Victor Wembanyama led the way with 16 points and 16 rebounds, showcasing his all-around impact. Keldon Johnson contributed 15 points off the bench, while Devin Vassell scored 13 points in his first game since December 29 after missing 13 contests with an adductor strain. Julian Champagnie and De'Aaron Fox added 13 and 12 points, respectively, but the Spurs struggled to contain New Orleans' late push.

Meanwhile in Minneapolis, Golden State delivered a dominant second-half performance to defeat the Minnesota Timberwolves 111-85, handing the Wolves their fifth consecutive loss. Stephen Curry led the Warriors with 26 points and seven assists, controlling the game after halftime.

Moses Moody added 19 points and eight rebounds, while Brandin Podziemski and De'Anthony Melton scored 12 points each. The win snapped Golden State's two-game skid and came without Jimmy Butler III, who is sidelined with a season-ending knee injury.

For Minnesota, Anthony Edwards delivered a standout performance with 32 points and 11 rebounds. Donte DiVincenzo added 22 points, while Julius Randle scored 11. However, the Timberwolves were outscored 64-39 after halftime, underlining their struggles in closing games.

Wales Seek Fresh Six Nations Start Under Steve Tandy, Says Captain Dewi Lake

WALES

Wales are aiming to turn the page on a difficult period in their rugby history as they begin the 2026 Six Nations Championship under new head coach Steve Tandy, according to captain Dewi Lake. Lake said the team is determined to focus on on-field progress and leave behind the off-field issues that have continued to trouble the sport in the country.

The challenge facing Wales is significant. The team has lost its last 11 Six Nations matches and managed just two wins from its previous 20 games in the competition, underlining a prolonged slump by their traditional standards. However, Lake believes the arrival of Tandy and a refreshed coaching setup has injected renewed belief and clarity into the squad.

Speaking to reporters on Monday ahead of the tournament opener, Lake said the atmosphere within the group has shifted noticeably. With a new coaching staff and a new squad coming together, it does feel like a fresh start for us, he said. Steve has already put a lot of emphasis on the values he wants to instil in the group, and that's been really positive. Wales will begin their Six Nations campaign with a daunting away fixture against England at Twickenham on February 7. The match will serve as an early test of the team's resolve and direction under the new regime.

Lake acknowledged the scale of the challenge but framed it as an opportunity rather than a burden. That first game against England is going to be massive for us, a real chance to test ourselves against the best, he said.

Theegala breaks top-10 drought as Scheffler maintains streak

LA QUINTA

Sahith Theegala finished a solid week with a perfect final round, earning his first Top-10 finish in over a year. Meanwhile, World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler reaffirmed his dominance by winning The American Express by four shots. Theegala carded a bogey-free 7-under 65 on the final day, steadily climbing the leaderboard to finish tied for eighth at 21-under par. This was his first Top-10 finish on the PGA TOUR since the 2024 Tour Championship and provided a much-needed boost following a challenging 2025 season affected by injuries.

The Indian-origin American's performance was especially impressive considering his slow beginning to the week. After shooting a 1-under 71 in the first round, he was tied for 118th place. However, he made a strong comeback over the next three days, with rounds of 64, 67, and 65. During this streak, Theegala recorded two bogey-free rounds, showcasing a remarkable rally. Theegala dominated the game, securing three birdies on the front nine and four more on the back. He wrapped up his round by birdieing two of his last three holes, showcasing his regained confidence and steady play.

Padikkal replaces Mayank as Karnataka captain

NEW DELHI

Karnataka have made significant changes ahead of their Ranji Trophy 2025-26 match against Punjab, appointing Devdutt Padikkal as captain with KL Rahul also returning to the squad for the fixture scheduled to be played at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium, Mohali, from February 1.

Padikkal has replaced Mayank Agarwal, who will now play only as a batter. Padikkal was in prime form in the recently concluded Vijay Hazare Trophy, where he scored 725 runs in just nine innings at an exceptional average of 90.62.

Karnataka, who are currently placed third in Elite Group B in the ongoing Ranji season, have been strengthened with Rahul returning to the side after performing well in the three-match ODI series against New Zealand at home.

Along with Rahul, India's fast bowler Prasidh Krishna has also been included in the 15-member squad. Prasidh will bolster the bowling attack, which includes experienced bowlers like Vidwath Kaverappa and Mohsin Khan.

However, the selection also brought notable omissions. Middle-order batter Abhinav Manohar has been dropped, while senior batter Karun Nair has been ruled out due to injury, dealing a blow to Karnataka's batting depth. The team management confirmed that Nair is currently undergoing rehabilitation and will not be available for the Punjab match.

Karnataka's batting unit includes Mayank, Rahul, Aneesh KV, Smaran R, and Shreyas Gopal.

France captain Antoine Dupont said his side must be fully prepared for a crucial Six Nations opener

France Must Be Ready for Ireland Clash

DUBLIN

France have no margin for error as they prepare to begin their Six Nations title defence against Ireland in Paris next week, captain Antoine Dupont said on Monday. The opening fixture of the 2026 championship will see two recent title winners collide in what is widely regarded as a potential decider for this season's crown.

France and Ireland will meet at the Stade de France on Thursday evening, February 5. The match has been brought forward to avoid clashing with the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics on February 6, adding an unusual twist to the tournament's traditional schedule.

Speaking at the Six Nations Championship launch on Monday, Dupont emphasised the importance of being fully focused from the outset. My focus is to be the best for my team and best prepared for the first game. It will be very special and we have to be ready for this first game, he said. Obviously, we are very excited to play this first game at home.

France enter the tournament as defending champions after lifting last year's title despite losing Dupont to a serious injury late in the campaign. Les Bleus sealed the championship even though their talismanic scrum-half suffered a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament during the penultimate match of the tournament. The setback ruled him out of the end of the season and France's autumn programme.

Now back fit, Dupont has resumed club action with Toulouse since November and is relishing his return to international rugby. It's special for me. I didn't wear the French jersey for almost a year, he said. It's a magical tournament, it's still the same feeling each time we play this kind of game.

The pressure on Dupont's leadership will be heightened this season after France head coach Fabien Galthie made several bold selection calls. Experienced centre Gael Fickou, winger Damian Penaud, and former captain Gregory Alldritt have all been left out of the squad. The trio boast a combined 215 international caps, making their absence a significant talking point.

Kerala Blasters rope in French player Yoke

KOCHI

Three-time finalists Kerala Blasters roped in French star player Kevin Yoke on Monday ahead of the upcoming Indian Super League 2025-26 (ISL), which will commence on February 14. Yoke was plying his trade in Super League 2 in Greece, where he made nine appearances for PAE Chania. The 29-year-old French international attacker, born 23 June 1996 in Clamart, France, primarily operates as a left winger but is equally capable on the right flank, offering versatility across the front line.

The left winger has joined the Blasters on a free transfer for the 2025-26 season. He is the second addition to the team ahead of the new season. The club has previously signed German attacking midfielder Marlon Roos Trujillo for the whole season. These two signings will strengthen the team, which will eye a comeback in the tournament.

IRELAND FRANCE OPENER

Ireland Aim for Fast Start as Doris Targets Six Nations

EDINBURG

Ireland captain Caelan Doris has underlined the importance of making a winning start to the 2026 Six Nations campaign when his side faces defending champions France in Paris next week.

Ireland and France, who have shared the Six Nations title between them over the last four editions, will clash in the opening match of the tournament at the Stade de France on Thursday, February 5. The fixture has been brought forward by 24 hours to avoid clashing with the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics, adding further focus to what is already a high-profile encounter.

Speaking at the Six Nations launch event in Edinburgh on Monday, Doris said momentum would play a crucial role in shaping the tournament. Momentum is big in this competition, he said. The way you start sets you up well, or not so well, depending on how it goes, so there is going to be a big focus on a proper performance to start us off.

Both teams are widely expected to mount strong title challenges again this season, making the opening-round showdown a potential tone-setter for the entire championship. Ireland will be aiming to assert themselves early against a French side that lifted last season's trophy with an impressive campaign.

Doris confirmed that the Irish squad departed on Monday for a short training camp in Portugal before travelling to Paris early next week. With limited preparation time, he believes the compressed schedule could sharpen the team's focus. So it's a short turnaround, not a whole lot of time, but it definitely sharpens the mind and it's one to get excited about, he said.

France enter the tournament with renewed confidence following the return of talismanic captain Antoine Dupont. Dupont missed much of last season after suffering an anterior cruciate ligament injury during France's 42–27 win over Ireland in Dublin in March, an injury that ruled him out for the remainder of the campaign.

Yuki-Goransson bow out in men's doubles, Indian challenge ends

MELBOURNE

India's top-ranked men's doubles tennis player Yuki Bhambri and his Swedish partner Andre Goransson crashed out of the Australian Open after losing to the Brazilian pair of Orlando Luz and Rafael Matos in the third round here on Monday. Luz and Matos won the first set despite winning a lower number of points than Bhambri/Goransson by raising their game during crucial points in the set. The Brazilians edged Bhambri-Goransson in the short rallies (19-16), committing fewer errors (-3) to secure the 7-6 (9-7), 6-3 win.

Despite showing resilience in the opening-set tiebreak—saving three set points from 3–6 and even earning one at 7–6. Just when the momentum seemed to be swinging their way, they dropped the next three points to surrender the set.

Momentum slipped away in the second set after a crucial turning point. Serving at 3–2 with a break and holding two game points at 40–15, Goransson hit back-to-back double faults, handing the break back to the Brazilians. From there, Luz and Matos tightened their grip on the match, seeing out a straight-sets victory.

Swiatek Storms into Australian Open with Win Over Inglis

World number two Iga Swiatek delivered a commanding performance to reach her third Australian Open quarterfinal on Monday

MELBOURNE

World No. 2 Iga Swiatek continued her impressive run at the Australian Open on Monday, defeating Australian qualifier Maddison Inglis in straight sets to book a place in the quarterfinals. The second seed dropped just three games in a clinical 6-0, 6-3 victory on Rod Laver Arena, marking her 14th career Grand Slam quarterfinal appearance and her third at Melbourne Park.

The match was notable as it marked the first time Swiatek had faced an Australian player at the Australian Open. While the two had met previously on home soil — with Swiatek defeating Inglis 6-1, 6-2 at the 2021 Adelaide tournament — this encounter showcased the Pole's growing dominance on the sport's biggest stages.

Swiatek wasted little time asserting control, breaking serve early and racing through the opening set 6-0. Her relentless baseline power, depth of shot and precise movement proved too much for Inglis, despite the home favourite showing flashes of resistance through strong serving and confident early point construction.

Several extended rallies highlighted Swiatek's superiority, including an intense 11-shot exchange where her aggressive groundstrokes forced errors from Inglis. Although Inglis produced moments of brilliance with well-placed serves and smart court positioning, Swiatek consistently raised her level at crucial moments. The opening set was sealed with a spectacular backhand overhead winner from a defensive position, underlining her athleticism and composure.

In the second set, Inglis showed commendable fighting spirit, managing to hold serve more effectively and push Swiatek into longer games. However, the world number two remained composed, absorbing pressure and striking decisively when opportunities arose. Serving for the match for the second time, Swiatek delivered a flawless game, holding serve to love and closing out the contest 6-3 with a series of aggressive forehands. With the win, Swiatek set up a highly anticipated quarterfinal clash against fifth seed Elena Rybakina.

Bangladesh Cricket Faces Deep Crisis After ICC Excludes Team

DHAKA

Bangladesh cricket has plunged into one of the most turbulent periods in its history following the decision by the International Cricket Council to exclude the national team from the upcoming Men's T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka and India, according to Bangladeshi media reports. The move has sparked widespread criticism and soul-searching within the country's cricketing establishment.

Bangladesh cricket entered a turbulent phase after the ICC excluded the team from the upcoming Men's T20 World Cup.

Reacting sharply to the development, a news article published in The Daily Star described the situation as possibly the most fragile phase Bangladesh cricket has ever faced. This is not merely the pain of missing a global tournament – Bangladesh cricket is passing through what may be its most fragile phase in history, the article stated, adding that resilience without a clear mission and vision would be meaningless.

The decision has also drawn concern from the World Cricketers' Association, which termed the exclusion a sad moment for the game. The reaction reflects the deep disappointment felt across Bangladesh, where cricket is regarded not just as a sport but as a central part of national identity.

The Daily Star analysis placed significant responsibility on the country's cricket administration and officials for the current state of affairs. It argued that missing out on the World Cup is only part of the broader damage facing the sport. Domestic cricket, the report noted, remains largely paralysed despite the completion of the Bangladesh Premier League. Even that tournament ended amid controversy, with a match-fixing scandal emerging shortly after its conclusion.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board is now under intense scrutiny. The board, currently led by former national captain Aminul Islam Bulbul, is reportedly grappling with internal discord and governance challenges. According to the analysis, BCB Director Muhammad Mukhlesur Rahman was forced to step down as Audit Committee Chairman following allegations of involvement in match-fixing during the BPL.

Further damage to public trust came after another franchise adviser aired fixing allegations during a Facebook Live session, fuelling speculation and outrage among fans.

Kalinga Lancers and Ranchi Royals face off for glory in title clash

BHUBANESWAR

The stage is set for an exciting showdown in the Men's Hockey India League (HIL) 2025–26, with Kalinga Lancers taking on Ranchi Royals in the final at the renowned Kalinga Hockey Stadium on Monday. With the season's top prize at stake, two of the most steady and well-rounded teams in the tournament will compete for the title.

Kalinga Lancers secured their place in the final by finishing first in the league with 16 points and then narrowly defeating Ranchi Royals 2–1 in a tense Qualifier 1. This effort highlighted their dominance and composure under pressure.

Ranchi Royals demonstrated great resilience by bouncing back strongly. After finishing second in the league and narrowly losing Qualifier 1, they came from behind to beat Hyderabad Toofans 3-2 in Qualifier 2, securing their spot in the final and keeping their championship hopes alive.

The Lancers have been the most defensively resilient team this season, allowing only 8 goals in the league stage. Their success relies on a tight defensive organisation and highly effective penalty corner execution.

Belgian star Alexander Hendrickx has been their key player, leading the team with ten goals, all scored from penalty corners. The Lancers also have the second-best penalty-corner conversion rate at 29.7%, keeping them a consistent threat in the opposition circle.

Playing at home in Bhubaneswar, they will benefit from enthusiastic crowd support as they strive to finish a nearly flawless campaign with the title.

Speaking ahead of the Final, Kalinga Lancers' captain Arthur Van Doren said, This has been a special season for us, and reaching the Final is a reward for the consistency and hard work of the entire group. We know Ranchi Royals are a dangerous side, especially in attack, so we will need to be at our best. Playing the final in Bhubaneswar is a huge motivation for us, and we are determined to give our fans a performance to remember.

Hockey India Congratulates Baldev and Savita on Padma Shri Honour

NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Monday extended its warmest congratulations to veteran hockey coach Baldev Singh and Indian women's hockey goalkeeper Savita on being conferred with the prestigious Padma Shri award. The honour recognises their outstanding and long-standing contributions to Indian hockey and to sport at large.

In a statement, Hockey India highlighted the transformative role played by Baldev Singh in shaping women's hockey in the country. Singh is widely regarded as the architect behind establishing Shahabad Markanda as a nursery for women's hockey. Under his guidance, the Shahabad hockey academy produced more than 80 international players, including eight who went on to captain the Indian national team.

Baldev Singh's impact went far beyond technical coaching. His mentorship helped young players, many from economically weaker backgrounds, transform hockey into a livelihood and pathway to national and international recognition.

One of the most prominent examples of this journey is former India captain Rani, whose rise symbolises the social and sporting change driven by Singh's efforts.

Hockey India congratulated coach Baldev Singh and goalkeeper Savita on receiving the Padma Shri for exceptional service.

Over more than two decades of running the academy, several notable players emerged under his tutelage. These include former drag-flick specialist Sandeep Singh, former Indian women's team captain Rani, Didar Singh, Sanjeev Kumar Dang, Harpal Singh and Navjot Kaur. In recognition of his immense contribution to coaching and player development, Baldev Singh was earlier awarded the Dronacharya Award in 2009.

The Padma Shri, Hockey India said, is a fitting honour for a legendary coach who challenged stereotypes around women's hockey, particularly in Haryana, and helped build a sustainable ecosystem for the sport.

The federation also lauded Savita, calling her another powerful example of breaking barriers. Savita made her senior international debut at the age of 20 and has since established herself as one of the finest goalkeepers in world hockey. Known for her composure under pressure, consistency and strong leadership, she has been central to India's resurgence on the global stage over the past decade.

BCCI mourns demise of former prez I.S. Bindra

NEW DELHI

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) expressed deep sorrow at the passing of former BCCI President Inderjit Singh Bindra, who died in New Delhi, at the age of 84. One of the most influential figures in Indian cricket administration, Bindra's vision and leadership played a defining role in shaping the governance of the sport in the country and strengthening India's standing on the international stage. His association with cricket administration spanned more than four decades, during which he served the game with distinction at both the national and state levels. During his tenure as BCCI president from 1993 to 1996, Bindra played a key role in consolidating India's position within the international cricketing fraternity.

He also served as president of the Punjab Cricket Association for an extended period from 1978 to 2014, where his focus on infrastructure development and grassroots growth left a lasting legacy. In recognition of his immense contribution, the PCA Stadium in Mohali was renamed the I.S. Bindra Stadium in 2015.

T20 WORLD CUP WARMUPS

Warm-Up Match Schedule for 2026 Men's T20 WC

NEW DELHI

The schedule for the warm-up matches ahead of the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup is expected to be announced later on Monday, with India 'A' and the United States of America set to feature prominently. The mega tournament will be held from February 7 to March 8 across India and Sri Lanka, marking a joint hosting arrangement for the global event.

According to sources, India 'A' are expected to play two practice matches as part of the warm-up schedule, while the main Indian squad will have one preparatory fixture before the tournament begins. The senior team, which will be led by Suryakumar Yadav, is yet to finalise the venue for its warm-up match. It remains unclear whether the fixture will be played at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai or the Brabourne Stadium.

Defending champions India will open their T20 World Cup campaign against the United States of America on February 7 at the iconic Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The match is expected to draw significant attention, given the growing profile of USA cricket on the global stage.

The final schedule of the warm-up games will most likely come today. As compared to the chatter going around, it might have some tweaks, a source familiar with the matter told IANS on Monday.

The Indian team is likely to assemble in Mumbai on either February 2 or 3 in preparation for the tournament. The Board of Control for Cricket in India has earlier confirmed that Tilak Varma will rejoin the squad after achieving full fitness and completing rehabilitation for a lower abdomen injury at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

The USA, placed in Group A alongside India, are scheduled to play two warm-up matches on February 3 and 5, with DY Patil Stadium among the venues being considered. Group A also includes Pakistan, Netherlands, and Namibia.

Shreyas to continue as Varma's replacement for two T20Is

MUMBAI

Shreyas Iyer, a temporary pick for the ongoing T20 series against New Zealand due to Tilak Varma's fitness problems, has been kept in the squad for the remaining matches. He will accompany the team to Visakhapatnam and later to Thiruvananthapuram for the final two games of the five-match series.

Iyer was named as a replacement for Tilak for the first three matches, but the youngster won't be returning for this series now. The 23-year-old needed surgery in Rajkot earlier this month during a Vijay Hazare match. He is currently at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, has begun rehab, and will join the squad in Mumbai for the T20 World Cup, starting on February 7, once he is fully fit.

India batter Tilak Varma has resumed physical training and is making steady progress with his rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence.

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